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THE WAR MOTIF IN SEAN O'CASEY'S DUBLIN TRILOGY

by

(C) HELEN LILLIAN LAMBERT

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled The War Motif in Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy submitted by Helen Lillian Lambert in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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..... Censal Ratio Estimation Technique .....

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ABSTRACT

The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, and The Plough and the Stars comprise an epic portrayal of political and social tragedy in which O'Casey focuses upon the destruction and disintegration of society brought about by an unjust social order, by ignorance, poverty, and war. A chronological reading of the plays reveals the development in the method with which O'Casey exploits the dramatically and emotionally potent device of war. Untempered patriotism, illusion, and idealism destroy thought, individuality, and the most basic and meaningful human relationships. War becomes increasingly pervasive in the Dublin trilogy; it is the setting in The Shadow of a Gunman but in The Plough and the Stars it becomes a terrifying agent of destruction.

The basic thematic concern in O'Casey's drama is the conflict between the forces of life (that is, youth, love, laughter) and the forces of death (disease, exploitation, poverty). The resultant chaos is manifested in the early plays in the large framework of military war. In the Dublin trilogy, the women promote life and counter the disintegrating forces of chaos of which their men are instruments. Unwittingly destroying the ordered pattern of their society, the men have been enticed to fight for a cause they barely understand by the potential honor of military heroism; instead

they find that war defeats rather than realizes ideals and all hopes for happiness or success.

The evil effects of poverty and war on the lives of the tenement dwellers pervade O'Casey's early plays and reveal his humanitarian vision and compassion for the sufferings of the victims of both social and military warfare. The early plays do not propose a system of social reforms but they do concern themselves with portraying the evils of injustice, poverty, vanity, and patriotism that lead to war, to the disintegration of society and its moral values, and to the perpetuation of poverty and ignorance. However the plays are never wholly pessimistic; a hopeful note is struck in O'Casey's moving portrayals of a few morally regenerated and self-sacrificing individuals amidst the confusion of war and the moral degeneration of the soldiers.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

> He was the living antithesis of the Easter Insurrection: a spirit of peace enveloped in the flames and rage and hatred of the contending elements, absolutely free from all of its terrifying madness; and yet he was the pure soul of revolt against not only one nation's injustice to another, but he was also the soul of revolt against man's inhumanity to man. [1]

These words, written by Sean O'Casey in 1919 to eulogize Sheehy-Skeffington, could very easily be applied to the dramatist himself. The pervading quality of O'Casey's life and art was conflict but the turmoil was a series of steps towards peace, youth, and laughter. In his autobiographical, prose, and dramatic works, he conceives of life as a struggle between the positive forces of love, youth, sexual and social freedom and the negative forces of hypocrisy, old age, and cowardice. Celebrating his love of life, O'Casey exhorts his readers to a dance of defiance similar to that which the Dreamer in Within the Gates urged Jannice to perform in her last moments of life:

> Dreamer (to Young Woman). Turn your back swift on the poor, purple-button'd dead-man, whose name is absent from the book of life. Offer not as incense to God the dust of your sighing, but dance to His glory, and come before His presence with a song! .... (exultantly). Sing them silent, dance them still, and laugh them into an open shame! [2]

Opposing the joyous expressions of life, the negative

forces of social chaos, warfare, disease, poverty, and premature death persist as thematic structures that reveal O'Casey's humanitarian vision and compassion for the sufferings of the victims of both social and military warfare. In his plays, satiric comedy leads directly to tragedy, for despite the pretentions to poetic ability and to notoriety as a gunman of Donal Davoren in The Shadow of a Gunman, or the humorous antics of Fluther Good, Peter Flynn, and the Covey in The Plough and the Stars, or of Joxer and Captain Boyle in Juno and the Paycock, the final impressions which the plays evoke are grim and tragic. O'Casey's drama reveals the disintegration of mankind under the impact of poverty, war, and exploitation by employers, champions the social and political emancipation of the workers, reveals the abuse of law, deplores the unbalanced scales of justice, and supports the cause of the young in their fight against the stale and repressive degeneracy of the old. The later plays -- those experimenting with expressionistic techniques and Marxist ideas and those portraying the cultural and political aspects of Ireland since the overthrow of British rule -- contain an equally dark vision of the disruptive powers of church and state. Significantly, however, the O'Casey imagination projects, in his most optimistic play, The Drums of Father Ned, a

golden future controlled by the young oblivious to the "immoral" moralizings of their parents and pervaded by a festival spirit of dance, song, and music in celebration of the joy of life.

The plays of Sean O'Casey are artistic microcosms of the chaos that most modern men inhabit. Reading the plays in the order of their composition, one can discern a development in the methods with which O'Casey explores the dramatically and emotionally potent device of war. As many critics have observed, R.F. Ayling and B.L. Smith among them, war is the backdrop in The Shadow of a Gunman, the force of destruction in The Plough and the Stars, and a malevolent ritual in The Silver Tassie. Untempered patriotism and idealism destroy thought, individuality, and the meaningful personal associations upon which society is based.

Another aspect of O'Casey's vision of chaos becomes particularly evident in his middle and later plays. I refer to the forces embodied within organized religion, nationalistic organizations, and politics which strive against positive forces such as love, youth, and laughter. Economics and religion give rise to the forces of evil in Within the Gates; poverty, politics, and church serving state in Red Roses for Me and The Star Turns Red; hypocrisy

and stifling inflexibility in Cock-a-Doodle Dandy and The Bishop's Bonfire.

John Bunyan's The Holy War is indicative of the Puritan writers' recognition that the war metaphor has positive value as a dramatic device since it enables moral issues to stand out against the chaos of life in stark severity and forces commitment from everyone. Commitment necessarily implies soul-searching and, consequently, personal responsibility in the struggle against evil. On the other hand, because conflict necessitates struggle between opposing forces, the exclusive use of the war metaphor to illustrate a conception of life tends to demarcate life into two rigid categories and robs life of its rich and ambiguous diversity. Sean O'Casey, however, escapes this stricture by the diversity with which he utilizes the war motif. A reading of the plays reveals both the consistency with which O'Casey uses the dramatic device of impersonal chaos impinging upon the struggling self-assertion of the individual in society and also the change in his dramatic presentation of that chaos. The latter is manifested, in the earlier plays, in the large framework of destructive military war and, in the later plays, in the "heart of darkness" in the souls of powerful men and social institutions. The dramatic presentation of

chaos also embodies two levels, the first being revolution and impersonal social forces and the second being the individual's personal doubts and allegiance poised between loyalty to the private self and to the public world.

Underlying all O'Casey's dramatic writings is his concept of what all struggle should be for: the economic and educational liberation of the workers (a broad social class in which he includes not only laborers but also intellectuals, scientists, and artists) and the establishment of a classless society marked by an improvement in the living standard of all and by increased artistic freedom of expression. In his article, "I Predict", written in 1962, O'Casey summarizes his visionary hope for a better world:

> In twenty-five years, either our lively earth will be a charred lump of rubble circling the sun, or we shall all be on our way to universal peace. I believe it will be peace. There is no room for anything else, certainly no room for war. All men of war will be but stuffed figures in a waxwork show .... Class and race distinction will have disappeared. Those with acute and flexible minds and those having peculiar skill with their hands will become respected leaders. Leisure for all will be abundant .... Science, art, and labor will go on healing and lighting up the body and mind. For each is a labourer -- the scientist, the artist, the philosopher, the author — all unified into the energy and surge of life. Such is my belief; such life should be; so it will be within the future closing upon us. [3]

In an excellent and illuminating article, "Immanuel",

Sean O'Casey lashes out at Arnold Toynbee's statement that understanding and patience arise from suffering, retorting that if suffering "brought us up to the highest thought and action, we should be by now gods of wisdom and understanding and practice godmanship in our own right." He goes on to describe the horrors of futile war and to point out the nature of man's real fight:

> All the wars man went through, jumping with courage or crawling with fear; all the sufferings and the miseries that all these wars brought to man; the individual pain and sorrow, the collective calamities, would have made man a mighty thinker, and would have burnished him into the belief that he had had damn well enough of it for ever. Man's real fight has always been against sorrow of every kind, a fight to banish it out of sight, out of feeling, out of the earth altogether: to abolish the weariness of hard work, the sorrows of insufficient food, the misery of cold clothing, of misery-making homes, of the pains of illnesses, and, when possible, the unhappiness of death to life before life is ripe enough to discard the care of going. 4

In the articles on George Bernard Shaw in The Green Crow, O'Casey pays tribute to the dramatist's struggle against social injustice and poverty, pointing out, at the same time, that poverty is the "gigantic foe" against any attempt to develop a system of ethics and thought that would "evolve a sane and sensible life for all." 5 Both O'Casey and Shaw shared the same horror of poverty since they both viewed its destructive capacity as being the root of all evil:

> Shaw saw that there was desperate disorder in poverty, and he liked order; he saw that there was disease in poverty, and he loved health; he saw that there was death in poverty, and he loved life. So, possibly, in these Dublin streets, the resolve first set itself into the young mind to circumvent this satanic trinity of death, disease, and disorder by a fight to abolish poverty for ever and a day. [6]

In his Preface to Major Barbara, Shaw wrote, in complete agreement with O'Casey, that, "The greatest of our evils, and the worst of our crimes is poverty, and that our first duty, to which every other consideration should be sacrificed, is not to be poor." [7] In his further discussion of the Gospel of St. Andrew Undershaft, Shaw went on to castigate society for its complacent view of poverty, reminding it of the evils that penury brings:

> We tolerate poverty as if it were either a wholesome tonic for lazy people or else a virtue to be embraced as St Francis embraced it. If a man is indolent, let him be poor. If he is drunken, let him be poor. If he is not a gentleman, let him be poor. If he is addicted to the fine arts or to pure science instead of to trade and finance, let him be poor .... Let nothing be done for 'the undeserving': let him be poor. Serve him right! Also — somewhat inconsistently — blessed are the poor!
>
> Now what does this Let Him Be Poor mean? It means let him be weak. Let him be ignorant. Let him become a nucleus of disease. Let him be a standing exhibition and example of ugliness and dirt. Let him have rickety children. Let him be cheap, and drag his fellows down to his own price by selling himself to do their work. Let his habitations turn our cities into poisonous congeries of slums. Let his daughters infect our young men with the diseases of the streets,

> and his sons revenge him by turning the nation's manhood into scrofula, cowardice, cruelty, hypocrisy, political imbecility, and all the other fruits of oppression and malnutrition. 8

The evil effects of death, disease, and disorder on the lives of Dublin tenement dwellers pervade O'Casey's early plays. There is little verbal commentary on the squalor surrounding the poor of Dublin; O'Casey prefers instead to drive social criticism home through stage scenery, costumes, and events. Occasionally, however, a character does become explicit about injustice and misery. In The Plough and the Stars, the Covey comments on the consumptive Mollser's death: "Sure she never got any care. How could she get it, an' th' mother out day an' night lookin' for work, an' her consumptive husband leavin' her with a baby to be born before he died!" 9 Donal Davoren, shadow of a poet in The Shadow of a Gunman, muses on his slum surroundings:

> Ah, Shelley, she [the moon] couldn't make this thrice accursed room beautiful. Her beams of beauty only make its horrors more full of horrors still. There is an ugliness that can be made beautiful, and there is an ugliness that can only be destroyed, and this is part of that ugliness. 10

Instead of experiencing the three Gaelic candles of truth, nature, and knowledge that can light up personal and world darkness, O'Casey and many other struggling poor people

experienced, not learning, beauty, and joy, but an embittering series of setbacks. As O'Casey wrote in Pictures in the Hallway:

> Rotten Dublin; lousy Dublin, what had it done for anyone? What had it done for him? Poverty and pain and penance. They were its three castles. The gates of Dublin: poverty and pain and penance.[11]

Throughout his writings, O'Casey battled for the availability of truth, nature, and knowledge to every man, but particularly to the workers who, he felt, were all-important in anything to be done for Ireland.[12] O'Casey advocated the acquisition of knowledge and a broad mind to be as important as the acquisition of a larger dinner plate.[13] In an article entitled "Life and Literature", O'Casey deplored the absence of self-realization among the workers and the consequent impression of the press, the politicians, and the employers that the workers were capable of "no higher expression than Calibanistic complaints against hunger and cold and hardship".[14] In order to overcome ignorance, the ability to be deceived by illusions and the tendency to become as mechanical and dangerous as the soldier, the workers must

> ... come out of their one-room tenements and out of their dimly minded Trade Unions ... to pull the plough a little nearer to the stars. They must learn that self-realization is more important than class-consciousness ....[15]

In order that the workers realize themselves, they must perceive themselves as they are and as they might become. By looking into the mirrors art provides, the members of the laboring class can see themselves as others see them, can meditate upon "their own splendour and their own poverty; their own beauty and their own deformity". 16 O'Casey sees the satisfying of the workers' "greatest need and most urgent claim" for the loss of ignorance and the acquirement of culture as the hope of the future. There is need of less ignorance "if the people of Ireland are ever going to be something other than a race of fools during an election, and a race of madmen during a civil war." 17

In order that the common people can win for themselves a broader scope of life, they must rally together against the oppressive forces of the employers, politicians, and clerics, but, Sean O'Casey realizes, "It would be a hard fight to drag them from their rag warmed stupor. 18 ... The people still waited for a Prometheus to bring down a brand of the divine fire and set the leaden hearts of the poor aflame from one end of Ireland to the other." 19 It is significant that O'Casey should describe their hearts as leaden for it is a term that recalls the chapter "House of the Dead" in Drums under the Windows, in which the gates

of the insane asylum, from which hope and will to action have fled, are of "heavy, dull, heartless lead". [20] The work that the laborers are forced to do is not work, but "the ripe robbery of life from the very young and the little older". [21] Sean O'Casey memorably describes, very much in the manner of Charles Dickens, the oppressive work that deadens the body, the spirit, and the mind:

> Here he was back in the dim dead-house again, parcelling papers and magazines; pasting labels; tying string endlessly; in the midst of floating dust, dim light, the passing to and fro of heavy, tired, dragging footsteps, and the murmur of voices saying nothing .... The steam from human breath formed a heavy haze round the jaded light that the gas gave. Dusky figures, like sagging designs formed by apprentice potters, moved about, topped by motionless faces, moving in the web of gloom, slandering life in silence; while overhead the shadowy clerks crouched in the glassy boxes, like dingy crabs in a dusty acquarium. And all this dead movement and dying murmur went on in the breathy mist and dusky glimmer, before the fluttering white curtains of the falling snow, filling the wide entrance with its lacy flickering strands, dodging here and there, as if in play with each other, but ever, at last, falling to weave a thicker covering for the footway and the road. [22]

The workers, described in the preceding chapter, "Work while It is Not Yet Day", as "miserere meuses" and as "twisted toads", are prisoners in the deadness and desolation of the prison warehouse. The atmosphere is stifling; the working conditions are hardly conducive to a pursuit of learning or to an ennoblement of the

spirit. Mental life is determined in great part by the health of the body. In "Immanuel", Sean O'Casey states that "the organs bedded in the belly are as important as man's highest one -- the brain. When disorders come within the belly, the brain is dulled; when the belly dies, the brain dies on the belly's doorstep." [23] In other words, before one can enjoy the lily, one must first have bread; only when one is secure of the physical necessities of life can one experience intellectual edification. In 1941, Sean O'Casey wrote:

> There is a Persian proverb which says: "If you have two pennies, with one buy bread, and with the other a lily." But if we have one penny, we can buy only bread. It has been my fight for a long span of years now to try to bring about a condition in which the worker spending his penny on bread, will have one left to buy a lily. [24]

Not only must wages be high enough for the worker to buy necessities for the body as well as necessities for the soul but working conditions must not reduce men to mechanized shadows of their unrealized potentiality. O'Casey fully understood the enormous difficulties in the struggle upwards to enlightenment.

> Who would be impertinent enough to throw a stone of condemnation at a Dublin docker, who has pushed a heavy truck carrying frequently half a ton for many hours across a Purgatorially paved quay, because, after having taken his tea, he does not sit down to interest himself (and,

> probably shock his wife) in Per Amica Silentia Lunae: or confound a visiting docker with the stoical wisdom of Epictetus. Or who would venture to point the finger of scorn at a carter who has been all day humping sacks of cement, each weighing sixteen stone, when easing his aching muscles by the fire, does not say when his wife calls out: "There's The Herald, Jack!" "The Herald! Hand me down The Garden of Epicuras — Anatole France." [25]

Thus, O'Casey realizes that the real fight must be waged against poverty, intolerance, class privilege, ignorance, "cod custom", and fear. The age of submission and/or forgiveness has passed. Common man must assert himself, must fight for his inherent right to a good life.

> But it is well that Pippa has passed by for ever, singing her song of forgiveness to us all. The Pippas now need a new song and a new hope; the women, side by side with their men, assaulting the castle, the big house, the boardroom, till the walls are breached, the doors down, and the song of life is heard in their halls. And in the song will be the unfolding of the final word from the evolving words of the ages, the word of the modern, the word En-Masse. [26]

The final and inevitable dominance of the word En-Masse, of the working class of which O'Casey was a part, sharing in their "rough energy and virile splendour", strengthened his determination to devote himself to their cause and to place their need above that of all other causes, even that of Republicanism, a movement in which he had been an enthusiastic participant.

> So they have decided against bringing the rough energy and virile splendour of the workers to the definite

> aid of the National Movement. Well, to hell with them then! Why should he give up all his energy and the little money he had to spare to a movement that left almost all the people out of it? ....Few of the Republicans were of his kinship. Here, in these houses in the purple of poverty and decay, dwelt his genuine brethren. Why shouldn't he fight for them against the frauds that kept them prisoners there? Sean had seen and felt the force of the corrupting hand stretched out for profit, sometimes from the sleeve of Christ's coat itself. [27]

Religion is another death force that O'Casey attacked continually in his prose and dramatic writings for he saw, in historical and present times, how the Church mocked the sexual urge, degraded the body in preference to the soul, frowned upon joyous pleasures of life such as dancing, supported the prevailing class structure that oppressed the downtrodden peasants, and participated in unholy wars of Christians against Christians.

In his superb essay, "Immanuel", O'Casey examines both man's subjection to religion in the past and his present flinging off of the chains. He considers why man conceived of possessing a soul and concludes that the origin of this concept arose from man's egotism. He says of man:

> Firstly, he couldn't understand why such an important being should be called upon to die. Secondly, man having come out of the dust, had to be ennobled in some way, so minds conceited declared that man could never die, for having been made from dust, he was, all the same, destined to be crowned with glory. [28]

Religion, charges O'Casey, has always denied life. "Didn't ye know," he asks, "that the Church has all along

frowned at the spurt and sport of the dance!" even though the worker and peasant found it to be "a sacrament of rest and joy from their labours." [29] The official Church preachings mocked the sexual urgings of the young although even the priests could not banish this universal urge from their physiology. O'Casey reports, "Quite a few of them ... were blithe and bright and early and late with the local lasses O, and who's here to blame them, for what signifies th' life o' man an' 'twerena for th' lasses O?" [30] But the exhortations against sex and "the gayer needs of life" are destructive since many readily susceptible men like John Jo Milligan in Bedtime Story become overwhelmed by a pervasive consciousness of sin, an attitude which O'Casey playfully satirizes in one of his poems:

WHOREMUS

Oh, scholars, hurlers, saints, and martyrs,
Save us from legs, lipstick, and garters,
And from that thing so chic, so teeney,
Th' dread, eye-opening bikini,
Which on the beach sets souls aflutter,
And points out all it's meant to shutter!

And when we go in city buses,
Please save us from short-skirted hussies,
Who, seated, cross their knees until
The shortest skirt gets shorter still!
Oh, save us from th' Venus wile, her scarlet lips,
Plump thighs, bright eyes, white breasts, and
curving hips,
The gown of nun, the bishop's skirt, is all
We need to save us from another fall;

> And so to bed, to lie there calm and still,
> Lapp'd up in safe desires, so sober, safe, and chill,
> Amen, amen.
> Oh, sober sleep, oh, quiet rest, oh, tranquil mind.

Now, after centuries of foolishness, the people have abandoned fright and embraced life, aware of the loveliness and importance of both soul and body. The future is now in the hands of the Mass-man, to make of it a prosperous, healthy, cultural celebration of life's richness. According to O'Casey, religion had its chance to lead mankind into an awareness of the respect due to individual human dignity, to establish peace, order, virtue, and love, to teach the joy of laughter and of learning — and failed. Catholic Europe was

> ... the scene of robbery, rapine, murder, battle, and sudden death .... even though every country at that time was pickled with churches, holy places of pilgrimage, monasteries, priories, and convents; when the air for miles up echoed with the chimes of church bells bellowing out the blessing of peace now, or the blast of war a day or so after; ... bishops were often in battle dress, and the Pope slept with a sword by his side: ... all thickly and chokingly enveloped in ... religion. [31]

Observing history, O'Casey concludes that what is known as morality is the result of physical and psychological evolution, of environment and social influence, of the need for safety and for order. As new needs arise or as man develops a broader outlook on life, new moral codes evolve. To illustrate this, O'Casey writes that today,

any war against Islam is not for the sake of religious conversion but for the maintainance of the European possession of Arab oil:

> The good Christians are now displaying their wonderful moral qualities to the Arab people with tanks, armoured cars, and nuclear cannon. Now the only thing needed to gild this moral life beyond man's temporal existence, and to show it all in its glory, is the Te Deum of hydrogen-bomb explosion. [32]

O'Casey has called war "the one great calamity fashioned by the more stupid mind and fumbling hand of Man."[33] War turns the earth into a graveyard, threatens our "civilization" with ruin, alters our culture into an ugly "pin-up show of paper chains and neon lights". [34] O'Casey sides with the young whose ideal in the present and for the future is peace rather than aggression. Railing against the "savage and shabby futility of war," [35] O'Casey echoes Macbeth as he writes:

> Life becomes a tale of an idiot when nation is set against nation, and war flames in our face to a clamor of sound and fury, signifying nothing; and life becomes an idiot's babble when we watch the few having so much while the many have so little.[36]

Yet religion, that supposedly compassionate, God-inspired force lends its symbols of peace and universal love and equality to the war cause that perpetuates injustice and slavery. However, while in the past the power and influence of the Church was invincible, the present, with its

new socialist systems of thought, has cut down "inhumanism ... the brightest evil smelling flower the Church ever grew."

> The sign of the cross was on every instrument of war known to man .... Most terrible of all, their own dear Lord, Jesus, has been dragged around and forced to see it all. That red sword of Molloch, masked as truth, has now been locked in its scabbard by the power and resolution within the courageous humanity of freethinker and radical. [37]

Religious connotations in the midst of war are to be found in, among other places, the chapter in Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, entitled "Comrades". The chapter is thematically an indictment of the inhumanity of war which is an ironic contrast with the pretensions of both Christianity and nationalism. The Irish Civil War brings into focus the subversion of human values; Free Staters and Republicans, former comrades against England for a cause they only half understood, are now in bloody strife against each other for a political principle that is equally vague. As the action unfolds, it becomes apparent that the men are acting within the non-moral context of war, a context which sanctions murder motivated by both personal hatred and political differences.

Yet O'Casey notes that war can bring with it seeds for a new life. The suffering that war inflicts can result in the people becoming aware of their situations:

"New thoughts were being born, not only in a cry, but in smoke, flame, and cannon-fire." [38] Writing of World War II, O'Casey observed that the turbulent indifference of the storm of war was heralding a newer and stranger day. The widespread destruction of the frenzied fight razed the old ways of life and thought to the ground:

> The stone-walled castle, no less than the gracious ivory tower, has been split to its foundations, and left both naked to the blast of anxiety, and much and grievous tribulation; so that life which was select and gracious, full of refined security, is, today, abroad on the wind-swept heath, without a cloak, abiding the pelting lightning-rent storm....[39]

The tragedy of war serves as a magnifying glass, enabling man to see himself as he had never seen himself before. Thus, a return to the old way of life is impossible for, "as the war has set our buildings tumbling, so it has set our needs tumbling into new ways of living, and our minds tumbling into new ways of thought." [40]

No external force or religious deity can bring man the good life. O'Casey's humanism, which strives for the abolition of poverty and the restoration of human dignity, recognizes the irresistable evolution to a higher life to be the result of human effort and achievement. The way to abolish sorrow from the earth is not by singing hymns or wailing prayers but by sweeping aside the obstacles of privilege, birth, tradition, and cupidity that prevent

many people from using the talents with which they have been born. "The times still show," O'Casey remonstrates, "worth on foot and rascal in the coach." [41] He maintains that truth is found in art, music, science, and technology and it is by the perfection of these arts that man's fabled spiritual salvation can be realized -- in this world. Religion was to O'Casey a fallacy, "hiding human foolishness and frailty":

> It would be a dream to say amen to the hope of Christians. All that man can do is to make what man's life may be; to make what man's life must be; to ensure that life coming on to the stage when the curtain rises shall play its part out till the curtain falls. That is as much as we know; that is as far as we can go. [42]

Turning from Sean O'Casey's prose works to his dramatic masterpieces and surveying them as a whole, it is apparent that the conflict between the forces of life and those of death is the basic thematic concern. O'Casey's handling of this theme altered with each successive play that he wrote. In the Abbey trilogy, consisting of The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, and The Plough and the Stars, the women represent the life-promoting forces that counter the disintegrating forces of chaos of which their men are instruments, unwittingly destroying the ordered pattern of their society. The men have been enticed to fight for a cause they barely understand by the

potential honor of military heroism; instead, they find that war defeats rather than realizes ideals and all hopes for happiness or success.

The Silver Tassie, as does the immediately preceding Plough and the Stars, dramatizes the crushing, depersonalizing influence of war, as fear and the demands of military discipline rob men of their individuality. To re-establish the sanity of order, O'Casey makes abundantly clear that it is the individual rather than the established institutions who must recognize his personal responsibility for the chaos which has, to a great extent, been perpetuated by mental and moral rigidity. In his plays, O'Casey directs his satire and ridicule against those joyless elements of society that distort the human spirit. Often the villains are generalized representatives of their class who timidly cling to the respectability that the prevailing social order confers upon them; examples are The Visitor in The Silver Tassie, The Purple Priest and the Lord Mayor in The Star Turns Red, to name only a few. Slightly more personalized figures, although still displaying an aversion to fostering the spiritual and physical life of the people, are Inspector Finglas in Red Roses for Me, Father Domineer in Cock-a-Doodle Dandy, and Father Fillifogue in The Drums of Father Ned.

Within the Gates, Red Roses for Me, and The Star Turns Red all clearly demonstrate the devitalizing effects of poverty. In The Star Turns Red, for example, the "Man with Crutch", "Woman with Withered Child", "Blind Man", "Young Man with Cough" have lost their vitality and, indeed, their individuality. Their ailments are their only distinguishing qualities. One is blind, another has a withered child, a third has a cough, still another a crutch, and so on. Although the play is relatively unsuccessful because of the pervasive didacticism that it contains, it is important as a gauge both of O'Casey's vision of a "just society" and his awareness of the disparity between his conception of an ideal social order and the current society in which he lived. In Within the Gates, O'Casey also celebrates the courageous struggles needed to achieve the social and cultural betterment of life and to defeat the stifling, gray army of the Down-and-Outs who are characterized only by the marks that poverty and economic depression have branded upon their bodies. Economic warfare is dominant in Within the Gates: unlike in the earlier four plays, military warfare is subdued but nevertheless remains everpresent in the changing aspects of the War Memorial which serves as a backdrop to the action of economic

and social strife, as a figure of menace, and as a negation of life.

In the latest phase of O'Casey's dramas, his Marxist ideas, very prominent in The Star Turns Red and Red Roses for Me, are still important elements but are now dominated by his celebration of beauty, song, dance, fertility, and artistic expression of the imagination in poetry, painting, and old Irish mythology. The death forces are those which attempt to repress this exuberant expression of life; O'Casey specifies them to be ignorance, superstition, violence, love of money, and social snobbery. One such target in Purple Dust is the rationalistic, materialistic, and pompous English mind that unquestioningly believes in the inherent and perpetual superiority of the British culture and Empire. However, the decaying mansion, the Big House, is not immune to the mutability of time. Stokes and Poges adhere to mercenary values and are consistently outmatched by the Irishmen whose lives are not dominated by nationalism, materialism, mechanization, or the "necessities of life".

Heroism and self-assertion are defiantly effective in Purple Dust, Red Roses for Me, Oak Leaves and Lavender, Cock-a-Doodle Dandy, and The Drums of Father Ned. Because they are young, strong, instinctive, and willing to pay

any price for their freedom, the heroes survive in the chaos of modern civilization. The three women in Cock-a-Doodle Dandy triumph by escaping from Marthraun's black, repressive house. Those who do not rebel against the evils of society are themselves poisoned, as was Foorawn in The Bishop's Bonfire who denied love to enter a convent and there suffered spiritual death. O'Casey identified with the Dreamer in Within the Gates, Father Boheroe in The Bishop's Bonfire and Father Ned in The Drums of Father Ned. All preach merriment as an appropriate reverence and preserver of life since, to paraphrase O'Casey, laughter reveals the greatest dangers in those areas where it is forbidden and points out the need for change.

In most of his plays, but with particularly terrifying pervasion in the early Abbey plays, O'Casey focuses upon the destruction and disintegration of society brought about by an unjust social order, by the poverty of the many produced by the exploitation by the few, by ignorance, hypocrisy, and "cod custom". The following chapters will focus upon O'Casey's three Abbey plays, The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, and The Plough and the Stars, with particular emphasis on the latter, as artistic microcosms of the chaos that modern men must struggle against for the freedom of self-assertion, of expression, and for

harmonious co-existence with all men on an equal basis. The early plays do not propose a system of social reforms as do, for instance, Within the Gates, The Star Turns Red, or Red Roses for Me, but they do concern themselves with portraying the evils of injustice, poverty, vanity, and patriotism that lead to war, to the disintegration of society and its moral values, and to the perpetuation of poverty and ignorance. The confusion of war, the moral degeneration of the soldiers and the moral regeneration of a few self-sacrificing civilians such as Juno Boyle in Juno and the Paycock, Bessie Burgess and Fluther Good in The Plough and the Stars, demonstrate, in the words of Ronald Ayling, O'Casey's "perpetual concern with bringing order out of disorder or of using chaos as a warning." [43] From a study of the Dublin trilogy, it is evident that social pressures, of which war is the most terrible result, are disrupting, to an ever-increasing degree, freedom of personal action, thought, and expression. This and other issues will be examined in the following three chapters on the individual Abbey plays, considered chronologically in order to more fully realize the progressively increasing scope and pervasion of war in each successive play. Particular attention will therefore be given to The Plough and the Stars, a

play in which war is at its most widespread, engulfing and disintegrating an entire society.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SHADOW OF A GUNMAN

> During this time Ireland was, to quote the Captain in Juno, in a terrible state of "chassis!" The Celtic twilight exploded into smoky tumult. Armed men in khaki or black, with blackened faces, crouched low in rushing lorries and every whining wail of every passing motor sang of death to someone. Flames from a single rifle lighted a dark street and rifle butts smashed locked doors. Dublin was at war with the British Empire, its regular army and its ruthless ruffians, the Black and Tans. A terrible beauty was in the process of being born.[1]

The Shadow of a Gunman, Sean O'Casey's first staged play, dramatises the destructive pressures of social chaos upon the freedom and aspirations of individuals who have no direct responsibility for creating the disorder. Throughout the drama, however, the men consistently display a tendency to utilize the escape routes of drunkenness, dreams, or the pretentions of vanity, bravado, or cowardice. This degenerate situation makes evident the moral deficiencies that are in fact responsible for the deplorable situation prevailing in the country at large. O'Casey, in launching his social criticism of the tenement conditions, political strife, and guerilla war activities that are, in his dramas, part of the perennial human struggle, indicted all of Ireland. The frame of the play, Shelley's phrase

"Ah me, alas! Pain, pain ever, for ever" lends the drama additional universality of theme and re-emphasizes the suffering inherent in the human condition.

When studying The Shadow of a Gunman, it is useful to read "The Raid", Chapter Four in Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, the fourth of his six autobiographical volumes, for its similarities and differences to the dramatic work shed additional light on O'Casey's concerns and attitudes in the play. In the autobiographical account of the raid, O'Casey's sympathies and concern are clearly directed towards the common people whose struggles for independence are spurred as much by consciousness of their oppressed condition as by nationalism. Cursing the wretched poverty of the slums as does Davoren who muses,

> 'She makes all beautiful on which she smiles.' Ah, Shelley, she [the moon] couldn't make this thrice accursed room beautiful. Her beams of beauty only make its horrors more full of horrors still. There is an ugliness that can be made beautiful, and there is an ugliness that can only be destroyed, and this is part of that ugliness,
>
> (The Shadow of a Gunman, II, p. 105)[2]

O'Casey describes the wretchedness of extreme poverty that transforms life into a dread, festering death-in-life:

> There were the houses, too -- a long, lurching row of discontented incurables, smirched with the age-long marks of ague, fevers, cancer, and consumption, the soured tears of little children, and the sighs of disappointed newly-married girls. The doors were scarred with time's spit and anger's

> hasty knocking; the pillars by their sides were shaky, their stuccoed bloom long since peeled away, and they looked like crutches keeping the trembling doors standing on their palsied feet. The gummy-eyed windows blinked blindly out, lacquered by a year's tired dust from the troubled street below. Dirt and disease were the big sacraments here -- outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual disgrace. [3]

But out of this "shrinking wretchedness", this evil that chills the glow of the sun, is born a heroic resistance among the slum dwellers against the forces of oppression. In "The Raid", O'Casey celebrates the passion flower of heroism that manifested its power in

> ... bitter curses, blows as hard as an arm can give, and a rank, savage spit into a master's face. Fought, these frantic fools did, led by Larkin and by Connolly; fought till the day-star arose in their shivering hearts, the new and glorious light, the red evangel, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, manifested in the active mind and vital bodies of men and women and little children. And now something stronger than bare hands was in the battle. Many a spear-point flame from a gun frightened a dark corner or a shadowy street, making armed men in khaki or black crouch low in their rushing lorries, firing rapidly back at the street grown shadowy again, or the corner now darker than before .... [4]
>
> * * *
>
> The Dublin slums at war with the British Empire; all the power of an army, flanked by gangs of ruthless ruffians; all the ordered honour of a regal cabinet and the mighty-moneyed banks fighting the ragged tits of the tenements. An unequal fight, by God, but the slums would win! [5]

O'Casey, in the above excerpts, honors the courageous strength of the lower classes; in <u>The Shadow of a</u>

Gunman, his admiration is less distinct since only the women, specifically Minnie Powell and Mrs. Henderson, display moral and physical courage and a capacity for action. Minnie Powell's love for Donal Davoren inspires her to save the "shadow of a gunman" by deliberately shouldering his burden and consequently placing herself in the way of danger and death. The same nobility of spirit drives Mrs. Henderson into a show of resistance against the soldiers as they are forcing Minnie into the lorry. Indeed, death and danger act as spurs to the life-preserving efforts of the women, in striking contrast to the moral paralysis of the men. Minnie Powell's sacrificial role not only makes obvious Davoren's and Shields' weakness and forces the poet's realization of his ineptitude in meeting his responsibilities but also presents devoted bravery as a social force of far greater import than either politics, art, or codes of behavior. Her love-inspired action exemplifies that bravery is not a seeking out of danger for its own sake or for personal exaltation. This latter is selfishness which, in this play, is directly linked with cowardice. [6]

If one removes Davoren's commentaries on art and Shields' passionate opinions about Ireland and instead studies their actions, one discovers that the two men

are cowards, not because they refused to take up arms against the British, but because they permitted — Shields in his overwhelming instinct for self-preservation and Davoren in his confusion and terror -- Minnie Powell to assume their responsibilities. Indeed, the play demonstrates on several occasions the superior strength of the women in relation to the men. The maternal, self-assured Mrs. Henderson protects and uplifts the timid Mr. Gallogher, encouraging him, by her freely given admiration, to elaborate even further his fantastic prose. A second example is the flourishing of Mr. Grigson at the expense of his wife. The following is Sean O'Casey's description of Mrs. Grigson:

> She is a woman about forty, but looks much older. She is one of the cave dwellers of Dublin, living as she does in a tenement kitchen, to which only an occasional sickly beam of sunlight filters through a grating in the yard; the consequent general dimness of her abode has given her a habit of peering through half-closed eyes. She is slovenly dressed in an old skirt and bodice; her face is grimy, not because her habits are dirty — for, although she is untidy, she is a clean woman — but because of the smoky atmosphere of her room.
> (The Shadow, II, p. 113)

Adolphus Grigson, on the other hand,

> ... is a man of forty-five, but looks relatively, much younger than Mrs. Grigson .... He has all the appearance of being well fed; and, in fact, he gets most of the nourishment, Mrs. Grigson getting just enough to give her strength to do the necessary work of the household. On account

> of living most of his life out of the kitchen, his complexion is fresh, and his movements, even when sober, are livelier than those of his wife. He is comfortably dressed; heavy top-coat, soft trilby hat, a fancy coloured scarf about his neck, and he carries an umbrella.
>
> (The Shadow, II, p. 115)

In marked contrast to the women, the men exhibit selfishness, moral weakness, cowardice, hypocrisy, and irresponsibility. Tommy Owens, brimming with nationalist songs and ale, confines his swaggering to the pub; Adolphus Grigson ineffectively conceals his cowardice behind his liquor, biblical phraseology, and the total subjection of his wife; Seumas Shields masks his recreancy and inertia by his religious adherance and his inveighing against the faults of the Irish people which, ironically enough, are precisely those of his own. However, as Armstrong notes, Maguire is a significant comment on the anti-heroic theme of the play; a man of remarkable reticence, he is also a man of significant action, being, as he is, a gunman disguised as a pedlar. Yet even Maguire displays anti-heroic qualities; his only stage action (that of leaving in Seumas' flat a bag filled with Mills bombs but believed to contain only spoons and hairpins) is one of deceit and exploitation of those for whom he is fighting.

In The Shadow of a Gunman, the war discloses the

unpleasant reality lurking behind the facades that the men, in their vanity or desire for self-preservation, present to the world in varying degrees of credibility. Maguire is a gunman disguised as a pedlar. Donal Davoren is a poet masquerading as a gunman, or rather, the shadow of a poet masquerading as a shadow of a gunman. Tommy Owens is a coward insisting that he is a brave man. He tearfully and hysterically announces to the "gunman" poet, "Mr. Davoren, I'd die for Ireland!" (The Shadow, I, p.95) The disruptive nature of war unexpectedly upsets a character's verbal paradings before his companions, draws him into the center of the violence and reveals submerged traits that may never have been otherwise detected. The following scene is an excellent example of the ease with which danger exposes the flimsiness of the men's illusions and pretentions:

> Seumas. You're one of the brave fellows that doesn't fear death.
>
> Davoren. Why should I be afraid of it? It's all the same to me how it comes, where it comes, or when it comes. I leave fear of death to the people that are always praying for eternal life; 'Death is here and death is there, death is busy everywhere.'
>
> Seumas. Ay, in Ireland. Thanks be to God I'm a daily communicant. There's a great comfort in religion; it makes a man strong in time of trouble an' brave in time of danger. No man need be afraid with a crowd of angels round him; thanks be to God for His Holy Religion!

Davoren. You're welcome to your angels; philosophy is mine; philosophy that makes the coward brave; the sufferer defiant; the weak strong; the ...

(A volley of shots is heard in a lane that runs parallel with the wall of the back-yard. Religion and philosophy are forgotten in the violent fear of a nervous equality.)

Seumas. Jesus, Mary, an' Joseph, what's that?

Davoren. My God, that's very close.

Seumas. Is there no Christianity at all left in the country?

Davoren. Are we never again going to know what peace and security are?

(The Shadow, II, pp. 111-112)

O'Casey has here used the war as a means of comic deflation. Philosophy and religion have proved to be flimsy defences against the tangible reality of bullets. During the Black and Tan raid, the deferential attitudes of both Davoren and Shields display the hollowness of their previous utterances about the strength provided by philosophy and religion, and the falseness and superficiality of their courage. The following scene depicts Seumas' nervous responses to the soldiers; it is obvious that the former has entirely forgotten the crowd of angels around him:

The Auxilary. .... What's your name?

Seumas. Seuma... Oh no; Jimmie Shields, sir.

The Auxilary. Ow, you're a selt (he means a Celt), one of the seltic race that speaks a lingo of its ahn, and that's going to overthrow the British Empire — I don't think! 'Ere, where's your gun?

Seumas. I never had a gun in me hand in me life.

The Auxilary. Now; you wouldn't know what a gun is

if you sawr one, I suppowse. (Displaying his revolver in a careless way) 'Ere, what's that?

Seumas. Oh, be careful, please, be careful.

The Auxilary. Why, what 'ave I got to be careful abaht?

Seumas. The gun; it - it - it might go off.

The Auxilary. An' what prawse if it did; it can easily be relowded ....

(The Shadow, II, p. 123)

The excerpt quoted above shows both the soldier's lack of value for life and Seumas' intense unwillingness to exchange this life for the after-life.

A similar treatment befalls Adolphus Grigson who has drunkenly boasted, "Dolphus Grigson's afraid av nothin' creepin' or walkin', — if there's any one in the house thinks he's fit to take a fall out av Adolphus Grigson, he's here -- a man; they'll find that Grigson's no soft thing." (The Shadow, II, p. 116) But, as his subjected wife later reports, Mr. Grigson is far from fearless, his terror banishing his regalness as he submits to the mockery of the soldiers.

Mrs. Grigson. Just to show them the sort of a man he was, before they come in, Dolphie put the big Bible on the table, open at the First Gospel of St. Peter, second chapter, an' marked the thirteenth to the seventeenth verse in red ink — you know the passages, Mr. Shields — (quoting):

'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, an' for the praise of them that do well ... Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King.'

> An' what do you think they did, Mr. Shields? They caught a hold of the Bible an' flung it on the floor — imagine that, Mr. Shields -- flingin' the Bible on the floor! Then one of them says to another — 'Jack,' says he, 'have you seen the light; is your soul saved?' An' then they grabbed hold of poor Dolphie, callin' him Mr. Moody an' Mr. Sankey, an' wanted him to offer up a prayer for the Irish Republic! An' when they were puttin' me out, there they had the poor man sittin' up in bed, his hands crossed on his breast, his eyes lookin' up at the ceilin', an' he singin' a hymn -- "We shall meet in the Sweet Bye an' Bye' -- an' all the time, Mr. Shields, there they were drinkin' his whisky; there's torture for you, an' they all laughin' at poor Dolphie's terrible sufferin's.
>
> (The Shadow, II, p. 125)

But the irrepressible vanity of the men re-emerges within minutes of the departure of the Black and Tans. Bravado and the embroidering of situations are defensive measures, designed to prevent public humiliation, soothe personal shame, and erase, at least imaginatively, the discrepancy between word and deed. Grigson and Shields exchange images of themselves as paragons of unruffled calm in the face of danger only to have the pretence exposed once again.

> Grigson (nonchalantly taking out his pipe, filling it, and beginning to smoke). Excitin' few moments, Mr. Davoren; Mrs. G. lost her head completely — panic-stricken. But that's only natural, all women is very nervous. The only thing to do is to show them that they can't put the wind up you; show the least bit of fright an' they'd walk on you, simply walk on you. Two of them come down -- 'Put them up', revolvers under your nose — you know, the usual way. 'What's all the bother about?' says I, quite calm. 'No bother at all,'

says one of them, 'only this gun might go off an' hit somebody -- have you me? says he. 'What if it does,' says I; a man can only die once, an' you'll find Grigson won't squeal.' 'God, you're a cool one,' says the other, 'there's no blottin' it out.' [7]

Seumas. That's the best way to take them; it only makes things worse to show that you've got the wind up. 'Any amunition here?' says the fellow that come in here. 'I don't think so,' says I, 'but you better have a look.' 'No back talk,' says he, 'or you might get plugged.' 'I don't know of any clause,' says I, 'in the British Constitution that makes it a crime for a man to speak in his own room,' -- with that, he just had a look round, an' off he went.

Grigson. If a man keeps a stiff upper front -- Merciful God, there's an ambush!

(Explosions of two bursting bombs are heard on the street outside the house, followed by fierce and rapid revolver fire. People are heard rushing into the hall, and there is general clamour and confusion. Seumas and Davoren cower down in the room; Grigson, after a few moments' hesitation, frankly rushes out of the room to what he conceives to be the safer asylum of the kitchen.)

(The Shadow, II, pp. 128-129)

The brilliant effectiveness of O'Casey's use of the war metaphor, vivified into reality in the second act, becomes more apparent as one studies the two acts as images in contrast. [8] The first act concentrates on the frustrations of a sensitive poet attempting to create while being continually interrupted by a comic gallery of tenement dwellers. The second act, however, focuses on the violent disruption caused by the raid, one that results in the

martyrdom of Minnie Powell and the tragic awakening of Donal Davoren to his failings. The superb accomplishment of Act II comes not only from the sustained tension but also from the ironic reversal of the heroic ideals and gestures of the first act. False attitudes disintegrate as previously innocent or amusing words and actions assume tragic importance from the new perspective of chaos. The men who initially strutted like peacocks of courage are shown in Act II to be cowards [9] while the women, initially disparaged (Shields had said of Minnie, "I wouldn't care to have me life dependin' on brave little Minnie Powell -- she wouldn't sacrifice a jazz dance to save it."), prove to be truly courageous.

The verses which open each act are indicative of the mood and atmosphere of that act. [10] The first act, essentially comic in spirit, at least on the surface, opens with a pastoral verse:

> Or when sweet Summer's ardent arms outspread
> Entwined with flowers,
> Enfold us, like two lovers newly wed,
> Thro' ravish'd hours --
> Then sorrow, woe and pain lose all their powers,
> For each is dead, and life is only ours.
> (The Shadow, I, p. 80)

Davoren's references to "sorrow, woe, and pain" as well as his favorite refrain, "Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!" assume tragic significance only in Act II,

maintaining in the first act generally comic associations. Even the first references to war are humorous and not to be taken seriously. At noon, some women are attempting to awaken Shields, who was to have risen at 9:00 A.M.:

Voice at the Door. Why don't you get up, then, an' not have the house turned into a bedlam tryin' to waken you?

Seumas (shouting). All right, all right, all right! The way these oul' ones bawl at a body! Upon my soul! I'm beginnin' to believe that the Irish people are still in the stone age. If they could they'd throw a bomb at you.

Davoren. A land mine exploding under the bed is the only thing that would lift you out of it.

(The Shadow, I, p. 80)

The second act opens with an indictment against the horrors of slum poverty which not even Shelley's "cold chaste moon" could make beautiful. The verse Davoren is now composing emphasizes the scorn, death, and disillusionment that pervade the close of the play:

When night advances through the sky with slow
And solemn tread.
The queenly moon looks down on life below,
As if she read
Man's soul, and in her scornful silence said:
All beautiful and happiest things are dead.

(The Shadow, II, p. 105)

The two acts also demonstrate the destructiveness of the vanity and weaknesses of the men which, seemingly harmless at the moment ("And what danger can there be in

being the shadow of a gunman?"), later explodes into a widening circle of disaster. Davoren at first voices his true sentiments -- "A man should always be drunk, Minnie, when he talks politics -- it's the only way in which to make them important" (The Shadow, I, p. 90), and "No man, Minnie, willingly dies for anything" (The Shadow, I, p. 92) -- but, as he becomes increasingly attracted to Minnie and aware of her admiration, he adolescently and vainly builds a new image of himself as a man of action.

> Minnie. You're only joking now; you'd die for your country.
> Davoren. I don't know so much about that.
> Minnie. You would, you would, you would -- I know what you are.
> Davoren. What am I?
> Minnie (in a whisper). A gunman on the run!
> Davoren (too pleased to deny it). Maybe I am, and maybe I'm not.
> Minnie. Oh, I know, I know, I know. Do you never be afraid?
> Davoren. Afraid! Afraid of what?
> Minnie. Why, the ambushes of course; I'm all of a tremble when I hear a shot go off, an' what must it be in the middle of the firin'?
> Davoren (delighted at Minnie's obvious admiration; leaning back in his chair, and lighting his cigarette with placid affectation). I'll admit one does be a little nervous at first, but a fellow gets used to it after a bit, till, at last, a gunman throws a bomb as carelessly as a schoolboy throws a snowball.
> (The Shadow, I, p. 92)

But however harmless the deception may at first appear, it has far reaching implications, namely the

death of Minnie and the arrest of Mrs. Henderson who attempted to rescue her. Indeed, as R. Ayling notes, the pattern of "harmless" deception unfolding its tragic consequences is repeated throughout the play. For example, Maguire's bag, thought in the first act to contain spoons and hairpins, is discovered to contain Mills bombs. Similarly, Maguire himself is at first believed to be a pedlar who is going to Knocksedan "to catch butterflies". Later, it is discovered that the "business" for which Maguire went to Knocksedan was more deadly than it had at first appeared. As Seumas dryly remarks, "He caught something besides butterflies — two of them he got, one through each lung" (The Shadow, II, p. 106). Tommy Owens' garrulousness spiced by a few drinks, by presumptuous camaraderie with the "gunman", and by declarations of secrecy are comic in the first act but dangerous in the second since Tommy's desire to shine in reflected glory (O'Casey describes him as a "hero-worshipper ... anxious to be on familiar terms with those who he thinks are braver than he is himself, and whose approbation he tries to win by an assumption equal to their own.") spurs his boasting in the pub and brings on the disastrous raid. Tommy's obvious posturings satirize Davoren's pretences. When the two appear together, it is apparent that any difference

in their behavior, which is egotistical, is one of degree.

Mrs. Grigson. They'd hardly come here unless they heard something about Mr. Davoren.

Davoren. About me! What could they hear about me?

Grigson. You'll never get some people to keep their mouths shut. I was in the Blue Lion this evening, an' who do you think was there, blowin' out av him, but that little blower, Tommy Owens; there he was tellin' everybody that he knew where there was bombs; that he had a friend that was a General in the I.R.A.; that he could tell them what the Staff was thinkin' av doin'; that he could lay his hand on tons av revolvers; that they wasn't a mile from where he was livin', but that he knew his own know, an' would keep it to himself.

(The Shadow, II, p. 119)

A third instance of comic deception containing tragic implications is that of Davoren's acceptance, on behalf of the I.R.A. with which he has no association, of Mr. Gallogher's letter which is amusing for its mixture of legal and colloquial phrases and for its pompous salutation:

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS COME,
GREETING
Gentlemen of the Irish Republican Army

The letter is significant to the tenement dwellers; as Mr. Gallogher is preparing to read, Minnie leans forward to listen and Tommy "takes out a well-worn note-book and a pencil stump, and assumes a very important attitude" (The Shadow, I, p. 98). Davoren accepts the letter because he is proud to be considered as the man to turn to when there

is "anything special to be done or particular advice asked" (The Shadow, I, p. 96). During the raid in Act II, Davoren desperately searches for the letter since possession of it would endanger his safety; ironically, his indiscreet pretentions have already done so.

The Shadow of a Gunman deals with the all-too-common mythmaking that transforms a false hero into a real man of action in order to satisfy a craving for Byronic excitement and romance. O'Casey wrote in 1963, "Irishmen either want to admire a hero or to become one, as the struggle for independence proved." [11] Essentially, the play deals with the progression of a false hero away from intoxicating vanity to a state of self-awareness and consequent self-disgust. O'Casey writes:

> Yes, we often chase after the wrong heroes or those who are not heroes at all .... The chasing of a hero is in these plays, and also the readiness of poor conceited minds to be chased and honored for a heroism which is often foolish: though, of course, it remains true to believe that it is good to die for one's country (people really), should the need arise. Old Glory is often fluttered for unworthy purposes, but the flag remains a true and beautiful symbol, even when held aloft by a scoundrel. We have to pay for vain conceits, and Davoren had to pay for his. [12]

As self-deception dissolved into self-discovery, Davoren could well echo the words of Pegeen Mike in The Playboy of the Western World upon her witnessing Christy

"murdering" his father for the second time, an act which at first she had regarded as being one of bravery: "I'll say, a strange man is a marvel, with his mighty talk; but what's a squabble in your back yard, and the blow of a loy, have taught me that there's a great gap between a gallous story and a dirty deed." [13]

Seumas Shields, an anti-heroic, Shakespearean clown voices with insight the brutality, destruction, and disillusionment that fanatical patriotism and indiscriminate bloodshed create. In the following quotation, Arland Ussher, although writing of Ireland during the Civil War, effectively captures the spirit of Sean O'Casey's dramatic depiction of the Anglo-Irish War in The Shadow of a Gunman:

> There was much less than there had been of anything that can, by any stretch of language, be called fighting; but there was more blind destruction, more brutality behind barrack-walls. The leaders could not but know that they had no faintest chance of success, and that the war they waged could only complete the ruin of their already sorely tried country; nor had they the excuse of the Easter Week rebels that they were arousing a torpid nation. The Civil War left a cloud of bitterness and cynicism which infected all intelligent Irishmen of my generation, as if such a country and such a people were not worth dying for. "Kathleen ni Houlihan," said one of my friends — a distinguished Gaelic scholar — "has turned out to be nothing but an old sow." [14]

Shields expresses the same sentiment, which is shared by the war-weary civilians, in the following exchange with Davoren:

Seumas. .... How peaceful the heavens look now with the moon in the middle; you'd never think there were men prowlin' about tryin' to shoot each other. I don't know how a man who has shot any one can sleep in peace at night.

Davoren. There's plenty of men can't sleep in peace at night now unless they know that they have shot somebody.

Seumas. I wish to God it was all over. The country is gone mad. Instead of counting their beads now they're countin' bullets; their Hail Marys and paternosters are burstin' bombs -- burstin' bombs, an' the rattle of machine-guns; petrol is their holy water; their Mass is a burnin' buildin'; their De Profundis is 'The Soldier's Song', an' their creed is, 'I believe in the gun almighty, maker of heaven an' earth' -- an' it's all for 'the glory o' God an' the honour o' Ireland'.

Davoren. I remember the time when you yourself believed in nothing but the gun.

Seumas. Ay, when there wasn't a gun in the country; I've a different opinion now when there's nothing but guns in the country -- an' you daren't open your mouth, for Kathleen ni Houlihan is very different now to the woman who used to play the harp an' sing 'Weep on, weep on, your hour is past', for she's a ragin' divil now, an' if you only look crooked at her you're sure of a punch in th' eye. But this is the way I look at it -- I look at it this way: You're not goin' -- you're not goin' to beat the British Empire -- the British Empire, by shootin' an occasional Tommy at the corner of an occasional street. Besides, when the Tommies have the wind up -- when the Tommies have the wind up they let bang at everything they see -- they don't give a God's curse who they plug.

Davoren. Maybe they ought to get down off the lorry and run to the Records Office to find out a man's pedigree before they plug him.

Seumas. It's the civilians who suffer; when there's an ambush they don't know where to run. Shot in the back to save the British Empire, an' shot in the breast to save the soul of Ireland.

> I'm a Nationalist meself, right enough — a Nationalist right enough, but all the same — I'm a Nationalist right enough; I believe in the freedom of Ireland, an' that England has no right to be here, but I draw the line when I hear the gunmen blowin' about dyin' for the people, when it's the people that are dyin' for the gunmen! With all due respect to the gunmen, I don't want them to die for me.
>
> (The Shadow, II, pp. 110-111)

In the above passage, Shields questions not only the heroism of the gunmen but the value of any political struggle that sanctions indiscriminate slaughter and a muzzling of free expression. Kathleen ni Houlihan is no longer a romantic figure but instead was a ruthless "Liberty leading the people" who demanded unswerving loyalty. The plight of the war's victims as portrayed in The Shadow of a Gunman is echoed in the chapter "Hail and Farewell" in Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well:

> Whist! The whine of a motor. He listened. Away over to the left, he saw the light of a searchlight flickering over the roofs. The Tans! He hurried from the broader street into a narrow lane, to crouch in the recess of a back doorway, his bag of books resting beside him. He heard the motor swinging along the street he had just left, saw the beam of light sweeping down the lane, covering him with a dreadful glory; but it darkened again in a second, and Sean, near a faint, felt his heart panting fiercely.
>
> The ambush! There it was; he heard the sullen bursting of grenades, the solid, piercing reports of rifle-fire, shouts that must come from the Tans, for he knew the Republicans remained sullenly silent, firing impassively, firing steadily at the head, the chest, or the belly of a Tan; and may God make their eyes keen and their hands steady!

> added Sean piously. But it was very annoying, thought Sean as he shivered in his corner, listening to the not very distant gunfire. The people were getting a little tired of the fighting. Gun-peals and slogan-cries were things happy enough in a song; but they made misery in a busy street, or along the quiet, unassuming walks of a village. If it went on much longer, most of the cosy Irish homes would become but handfuls of ashes to be poured reverently into jars, and put safely away on a shelf for sweet remembrance. The sovereign people were having a tough time of it from enemies on the left and friends on the right. Going out for a stroll, or to purchase a necessary, no-one knew when he'd have to fall flat on his belly, to wait for death to go by, in the midst of smoke and fire and horrifying noises. Armoured cars clattered through the city; lorries, caged in with wire and crowded with Tans pointing guns at everyone's breast, cruised through the streets; and patrols, with every rifle cocked to the last hair, crept along every kerb. Every narrow lane seemed to be the dark dazzling barrel of a rifle. Christian Protestant England and Christian Catholic Ireland were banging away at each other for God, for King, and Country. [16]

It is at these points in both play and autobiography that O'Casey shows his disillusionment with war as a means to bring about change. Both sides, Republicans and British, are equally brought to task for their extremist stance and common hatred. This criticism is also made less didactically in the songs sung by Tommy Owens and Adolphus Grigson, two disreputable and drunken poseurs. Tommy Owens' fervor, occurring at an inappropriate moment in the play (Davoren has just attempted to kiss Minnie), exemplifies the romantic patriotism, lacking a hold on reality, that O'Casey derides in this and later plays.

Tommy. .... (He catches Davoren's hand.) Two firm hands clasped together will all the power outbrave of the heartless English tyrant, the Saxon coward an' knave .... (He breaks into song.)

High upon the gallows tree stood the noble-hearted three,
By the vengeful tyrant stricken in their bloom;
But they met him face to face with the spirit of their race,
And they went with souls undaunted to their doom!

Minnie (in an effort to quell his fervour). Tommy Owens, for goodness' sake ...

Tommy (overwhelming her with a shout):

God save Ireland ses the hayros, God save Ireland ses we all,
Whether on the scaffold high or the battle-field we die.
Oh, what matter when for Ayryinn dear we fall!
(Tearfully) Mr. Davoren, I'd die for Ireland.
(The Shadow, I, pp. 94-95)

Tommy's song, "High upon the gallows tree", sung by patriotic Republicans and Grigson's "Erin's Orange Lily O", favored by Ulster Protestants, reveal the extremism of both orange and green opinions [17] and consequently lead us to a rejection of both attitudes as life-destroying.

The contrast between men and women is central in O'Casey's vision of the human condition; in The Shadow of a Gunman, the example of Minnie Powell's nobility condemns both the callous insensitivity of Seumas Shields and the paralyzed dream state of Donal Davoren. A particularly tragic moment in the play occurs in the exchange between Davoren and Shields after Minnie has been shot:

Davoren (in a tone of horror-stricken doubt). D'ye hear what they're sayin', Shields, d'ye hear what they're sayin' -- Minnie Powell is shot.
Seumas. For God's sake speak easy, an' don't bring them in here on top of us again.
Davoren. Is that all you're thinking of? Do you realize that she has been shot to save us?
Seumas. Is it my fault; am I to blame?
Davoren. It is your fault and mine, both; oh, we're a pair of dastardly cowards to have let her do what she did.
Seumas. She did it off her own bat -- we didn't ask her to do it.

(The Shadow, II, p. 129)

Shields, timid and self-centered, refuses to feel guilt for his role in Minnie's death; he remains monumentally insensitive and unmoved. Davoren, however, realizes the terrible inadequacy of his personality that prevented him from acting heroically and disinterestedly as Minnie had done. His self-awareness culminates in the realization that,

> "It's terrible to think that little Minnie is dead, but it's still more terrible to think that Davoren and Shields are alive. Oh, Donal Davoren, shame is your portion now till the silver cord is loosened and the golden bowl be broken. Oh, Davoren, Donal Davoren, poet and poltroon, poltroon and poet!"
>
> (The Shadow, II, p. 130)

Davoren's paralysis in a moment of extreme tension and danger, particularly when considered in contrast to Minnie's active self-possession, condemns the poet, not for holding an extremist viewpoint (which he does not) but for failing to live up to his Promethean image of him-

self, for recognizing the social evils which warrant struggle against and yet withdrawing from the battle, spouting sentiments in a scene of paralysed inactivity.

CHAPTER THREE

JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK

As in The Shadow of a Gunman, vanity and anti-heroism are significant elements in Juno and the Paycock. In the following quotation, we can trace certain parallels to Donal Davoren in O'Casey's description of Captain Boyle:

> Juno is a tragedy of vanity and of relinquishment to vanity. There are many Captain Boyles in this world -- in love with their own images. Most of us have many minor vanities but they do not cripple our ability to act sensibly. But the Captain and his parasitic companion have let their selfish, petty interests ruin their lives — and the lives of others. The Captain, intent on his personal glory, ignores his duties and disaster ensues; he is an Irish Narcissus. [1]

The chaos in society that Captain Boyle is a victim of is also created by his own repeated irresponsibility which creates hardship for his family, a unit that, in the course of the play's action, becomes a microcosm of Ireland. The "chassis" to which Boyle constantly refers, that is, the larger social conflict of war, serves as the framework of the play and as a motif through which various themes can be explored.

Beneath Joxer and Boyle's petty conniving, self-indulgence, and unrestrained flamboyance is cowardice,

vicious selfishness, and social decay, further evidenced by a disrespect for truth and for responsibility. Their illusory fantasies and drunken boasts shelter them from the harshness of real effort. Boyle can lift up his self-esteem in the face of Juno's tormenting by inventing tales of working on a ship or fighting for Ireland.

> Voice of Coal Vendor. Blocks ... coal-blocks! Blocks ... coal blocks!
>
> Joxer. God be with the young days when you were steppin' the deck of a manly ship, with the win' blowin' a hurricane through the masts, an' the only sound you'd hear was, 'Port your helm!' an' the only answer, 'Port it is, sir!'
>
> Boyle. Them was days, Joxer, them was days. Nothin' was too hot or too heavy for me then. Sailin' from the Gulf o' Mexico to the Antanartic Ocean. I seen things, I seen things, Joxer, that no mortal man should speak about that knows his Catechism. Ofen, an' ofen, when I was fixed to the wheel with a marlin-spike, an' the win's blowin' fierce an' the waves lashin' an' lashin', till you'd think every minute was goin' to be your last, an' it blowed, an' blowed -- blew is the right word, Joxer, but blowed is what the sailors use ....
>
> Joxer. Aw, it's a darlin' word, a daarlin' word.
>
> Boyle. An', as it blowed an' blowed, I ofen looked up at the sky an' assed meself the question -- what is the stars, what is the stars?
>
> Voice of the Coal Vendor. Any blocks, coal-blocks; blocks, coal blocks!
>
> Joxer. Ah, that's the question, that's the question -- what is the stars?
>
> Boyle. An' then, I'd have another look, an' I'd ass meself -- what is the moon?
>
> Joxer. Ah, that's the question -- what is the moon, what is the moon?
>
> (Juno and the Paycock, I, p. 23)[2]

In addition to such weaving of yarns, Boyle also fabricates disability to justify his perpetual idling and vainglorious

strutting about. As Juno chides,

> "Ah, then, me boyo, you'd do far more work with a knife an' fork than ever you'll do with a shovel! If there was e'er a genuine job goin' you'd be dh'other way about — not able to lift your arms with the pains in your legs! Your poor wife slavin' to keep the bit in your mouth, an' you gallivantin' about all the day like a paycock!"
> (Juno, I, pp. 13-14)

In the first act, such irresponsibility seems comic because there is no dramatic evidence to indicate that the family welfare is at stake. By the third act, however, the same antics have become tragic since they indicate the refusal of Captain Boyle to exert himself for the well-being of the family as a whole. It is for this reason that the play and most other O'Casey plays are neither exclusively comic nor tragic, but combine both extremes. In isolation, no aspect of an action or person can be deemed comic or tragic, good or evil; it is only in relation to the effect produced that positive or negative values can be affixed.

Thus, in Juno and the Paycock, the moments of farce are not there only for comic relief but also to depict disorganization and restlessness which, as the play unfolds, expand from personal associations to the national and, ultimately, to the universal in its commentary on the disruptive power of poverty and civil war. By the play's end, we realize that we have been witnessing not just the disintegration of one family but that of an

entire nation. This disintegration has largely been the result of the irresponsibility of anti-heroes such as Boyle and Joxer whose innate mental and emotional shallowness are continuously revealed in their constant reiteration of quotations that not only display a lack of feeling (Joxer's only response to the numerous tenement deaths in the guerilla fighting is the glorified sentiment, "Let me like a soldier fall — me chest expandin' to th' ball!") but also allow "the present and the past to be set in perspective, and to exhibit ironically the decay of past standards in present-day life." [3] Romantic conceptions of war, which O'Casey always criticised, have their origin in legendary tales of heroism. Juno Boyle, the true hero in the play, suffers a devaluation of her name by the unappreciativeness of her husband:

> Bentham. Juno! What an interesting name! It reminds one of Homer's glorious story of ancient gods and heroes.
>
> Boyle. Yis, doesn't it? You see, Juno was born an' christened in June; I met her in June; we were married in June, an' Johnny was born in June, so wan day I says to her, 'You should ha' been called Juno,' an' the name stuck to her ever since.
>
> (Juno, I, p. 27)

A further parody of the war situation comes with Captain Boyle's declaration of independence. Previously he had been not very convincingly claiming to have no need for

Juno's aid. ("Breakfast! Well, they can keep their breakfast for me. Not if they went down on their bended knees would I take it -- I'll show them I've a little spirit left in me still!" The only spirit left in him must be stout, for half a minute later, he is tending Juno's sausages on the fire.) Now, his assertion of independence comes after a series of frustrations and frights and it is clear from the play as a whole that this domestic situation is parallel to the political situation.

Joxer. .... I'd betther be goin', Captain; you couldn't tell the minute Juno'd hop in on us.

Boyle. Let her hop in; we may as well have it out first as at last. I've made up me mind -- I'm not goin' to do only what she damn well likes.

Joxer. Them sentiments does you credit, Captain; I don't like to say anything as between man an' wife, but I say as a butty, as a butty, Captain, that you've stuck it too long, an' that it's about time you showed a little spunk.

How can a man die betther than facin' fearful odds,
For th' ashes of his fathers an' the temples of his gods?

Boyle. She has her rights -- there's no one denyin' it, but haven't I me rights too?

Joxer. Of course you have -- the sacred rights o' man!

Boyle. Today, Joxer, there's goin' to be issued a proclamation be me, establishin' an independent Republic, an' Juno'll have to take an oath of allegiance.

Joxer. Be firm, be firm, Captain; the first few minutes'll be the worst: if you gently touch a nettle it'll sting you for your pains; grasp it like a man of mettle, an' as soft as silk remains!

(Juno, I, p. 24)

Boyle is ambiguous about the way independence will be fought for, prefering to dwell on the final goal only, much as did the I.R.A. forces whom O'Casey criticized so severely in articles, speeches, his autobiographies, and in The Plough and the Stars. It is also interesting to note that not all elements in the new "republic" will be independent. Juno will have to take an oath of allegiance. Joxer's two-line quotation embodies a romantically patriotic sentiment and is comically incongruent with the situation. All resistence is abandoned, however, at the first sound of Juno's voice.

> Joxer (flying out of the window). Holy God, here she is!
> Boyle (packing the things away with a rush in the press). I knew that fella ud stop till she was in on top of us!
>
> (Juno, I, p. 24)

The anti-heroism, both personal and national, that O'Casey here presents very effectively, consists of the discrepancy between the resolve and the actual action, situation, and speaker.

But O'Casey also employs Boyle as a spokesman for his own opinions. In the following excerpt, we have provided for us a background for the war situation — that is, "the political and economic betrayal of the Irish people by their clergy";[4]

> Boyle. If they do anything for you, they'd want you to be livin' in the Chapel .... I'm goin' to tell you somethin', Joxer, that I wouldn't tell to anyone else -- the clergy always had too much power over the people in this unfortunate country .... Didn't they prevent the people in '47 from seizin' the corn, an' they starvin'; didn't they down Parnell; didn't they say that hell wasn't hot enough nor eternity long enough to punish the Fenians? We don't forget, we don't forget them things, Joxer. If they've taken everything else from us, Joxer, they've left us our memory.
>
> (Juno, I, p. 32)

Dr. Ronald Ayling, in his article, "History and Artistry in Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy", provides an additional quotation that supports Boyle's reference to the situation in Ireland. He notes the similarity in theme and speech pattern between Boyle's outburst and a Fenian's account of a sermon delivered in March 1867 by Bishop Moriarty:

> Things are definitely looking up for the Fenians now, despite the ill-timed blast delivered at them by Bishop Moriarty of Kerry. In a sermon on hell the Bishop took the opportunity to remark that, although the sufferings inflicted in that fiery pit were fearsome, still hell was not hot enough nor eternity long enough to punish such miscreants as the Fenian leaders.[5]

Juno and the Paycock explores the relationships between bravery, love and sacrifice mainly through the heroic stoicism of Juno Boyle, whose long experience and resultant charitableness inspire her to command a continuing grasp on life that is not to be weakened by war, poverty, or personal disasters such as the death of her

son, the unwanted pregnancy of her daughter, and the irresponsibility of her husband. O'Casey describes both the war background and the chief sufferers of the chaos in the following excerpt from "O'Casey in Hungarian Costume":

> The play, Juno and the Paycock, concerns itself with the time of the calamitous Civil War in Ireland, a fight between two parties over a few words included within the Treaty made by one of them with England. The difference between the two parties was trivial, almost insignificant, not worth a fight with fists much less with cannon, machine-gun, and rifle.... The members of the contending parties, too, were all of the same Faith, all good Catholics, yet they tortured and slaughtered each other with vigor and venom, in the way that Christians do, have done, and will do again. During the fight, father was against the son, brother against brother, girl against her lover; all fighting it out for a clause no one understood and for which very few cared; while the mothers, alone sensible and suffering, bore the brunt of it all among the workers, knowing, probably, that when it would be all over, they and their families would be living in the same old way, denying themselves things that rent might be paid, and uncertain where the food for the next day would come from. [6]

The trials of Juno, a figure of courage, and her ability to endure and phoenix-like, arise from the ashes of her life, are celebrated in the play. O'Casey admired, and was himself an example of, an individual's ability to battle crippling circumstance (war, poverty, ignorance) and still emerge, perhaps weakened physically but unbroken spiritually. The deadliness of the struggle is indicated

very early in the play by O'Casey's description of Mary:

> Two forces are working in her mind -- one, through the circumstances of her life, pulling her back; the other, through the influence of books she has read, pushing her forward. The opposing forces are apparent in her speech and her manners, both of which are degraded by her environment, and improved by her acquaintance — slight though it be -- with literature.
>
> (Juno, I, p. 5)

In marked contrast to the subterfuge of Captain Boyle and Joxer Daly, Juno is humane, good-natured and religious in the natural sense. She observes to Charles Bentham that,

> With all our churches an' religions, the worl's not a bit the betther .... An' Irelan's takin' a leaf out o' the worl's buk; when we got the makin' of our own laws I thought we'd never stop to look behind us, but instead of that we never stopped to look before us! If the people ud folley up their religion betther there'd be a betther chance for us....
>
> (Juno, II, p. 36)

Juno's religion is a humanitarian and personal one, very pragmatic in its views of life. Unlike her, Johnny relies on icons to convey his beliefs in charity, beliefs that are inspired by fear. In trying to ward off death, Johnny perpetually burns a red light before the statue of the Virgin Mary, a light that assumes, by the end of the play, an identification with his betrayal, the murder of Robbie Tancred, his conscience, blood spilt in violence and treachery, and his own life span.

Johnny's attempts to escape from the fate he has fashioned for himself are pathetic and futile for even if he did escape physically from his pursuers as he hopes (When hearing of the legacy, he says, "We'll be able to get out o' this place now, an' go somewhere we're not known,"), he cannot escape his conscience. His war activities and his betrayals have ruined both his mind and body. Immediately prior to the Boyle celebration in Act II, Juno emphasizes this point in her questions to her son.

> Mrs. Boyle. 'An' what is it you're thinkin' of, allanna?
> Johnny. Nothin', nothin', nothin'.
> Mrs. Boyle. Sure, you must be thinkin' of somethin'; it's yourself that has yourself the way y'are; sleepin' wan night in me sisther's, an' the nex' in your father's brother's -- you'll get no rest goin' on that way.
> Johnny. I can rest nowhere, nowhere, nowhere.
> (Juno, II, p. 35)

The reality of Johnny's self-imprisonment by his infamous deed is vividly depicted in the juxtaposition of the Boyle's celebration of their promised riches and the funeral of the man whom Johnny betrayed, which occur simultaneously. Continuously the conversation turns to the current war situation in Ireland, so much so that Johnny, "rising swiftly, pale and affected", cries out, "What sort o' talk is this to be goin' on with? Is there nothin' betther to be talkin' about but the killin' o' people? My God, isn't it bad enough for these things

to happen without talkin' about them!" (Juno, II, p. 38)

The party is interrupted three times. First, Johnny, who has left the room, screams and returns very agitated, "his face pale, his lips twitching, his limbs trembling". He cries out, "Shut the door, shut the door, quick, for God's sake! Great God, have mercy on me! Blessed Mother o' God, shelter me, shelter your son!" (Juno, II, p. 38) In a movement that identifies her with the Mother of God, Juno catches her son in her arms and with her bodily warmth shields him from the phantom of his conscience.

> Johnny. ....I seen him .... I seen Robbie Tancred kneelin' down before the statue ... an' the red light shinin' on him ... an' when I went in ... he turned an' looked at me ... an' I seen the woun's bleedin' in his breast .... Oh, why did he look at me like that? ... it wasn't my fault that he was done in .... Mother o' God, keep him away from me!
>
> (Juno, II, pp. 38-39)

The second intrusion of war into the frivolities is the descent of the funeral party down the stairs past the Boyle apartment. Juno's humanity emerges at once as she warns her husband not to start the gramophone out of consideration for Mrs. Tancred's suffering and tells Mary to open the door to give the bereaved mother some light. The First Neighbour seeks to comfort Mrs. Tancred with the hope of the eventual triumph of her son's political

leanings, an approach very similar to that of Captain Brennan's remark in The Plough and the Stars that "Mrs. Clitheroe's grief will be a joy when she realizes that she has had a hero for a husband" (IV, p. 204), but Mrs. Tancred rejects this possibility as irrelevant since it cannot bring her son to life again. Her emotions and sufferings transcend the petty immediacies of war or daily life and take on a universality that binds her with all women everywhere.

First Neighbour. It's a sad journey we're goin' on, but God's good, an' the Republicans won't be always down.

Mrs. Tancred. Ah, what good is that to me now? Whether they're up or down -- it won't bring me darlin' boy from the grave....

First Neighbour. Still an' all, he died a noble death, an' we'll bury him like a king.

Mrs. Tancred. An' I'll go on livin' like a pauper. Ah, what's the pains I suffered bringin' him into the world to carry him to his cradle, to the pains I'm sufferin' now, carryin' him out o' the world to bring him to his grave!

Mary. It would be better for you not to go at all, Mrs. Tancred, but to stay home beside the fire with some o' the neighbours.

Mrs. Tancred. I seen the first of him, an' I'll see the last of him .... Me home is gone now; he was me only child, an' to think that he was lyin' for a whole night stretched out on the side of a lonely counthry lane, with his head, his darlin' head, that I ofen kissed an' fondled, half-hidden in the wather of a runnin' brook. An' I'm told he was the leadher of the ambush where me nex' door neighbour, Mrs. Mannin', lost her Free State

> soldier son. An' now here's the two of us oul' women, standin' one on each side of a scales o' sorra, balanced be the bodies of our two dead darlin' sons .... Mother o' God, Mother o' God, have pity on the pair of us! ... O Blessed Virgin, where were you when me darlin' son was riddled with bullets! .... Sacred Heart of the Crucified Jesus, take away our hearts o' stone ... an' give us hearts o' flesh! ... Take away this murdherin' hate ... an' give us Thine own eternal love!
> (Juno, II, pp. 45 - 46)

The reactions of those in the Boyle tenement room to the sorrowful words of Mrs. Tancred are rich in a variation that reflects the entire range of possible emotions that such a scene could create. Johnny's reaction is, predictably, guilt ridden but, interestingly enough, a motive for his betrayal, that is, jealousy, emerges. Reacting to his mother's statement that he and Tancred had been friends, Johnny bursts out, "Am I always to be havin' to tell you that he was no friend o' mine? I never cared for him, an' he could never stick me. It's not because he was commandant of the Battalion that I was Quarther-Master of, that we were friends"(Juno, II, p.46)[7]. Bentham, in response to Juno's information that Tancred was "a nice quiet boy, but lattherly he went to hell, with his Republic first, an' Republic last an' Republic over all" (Juno, II, p. 46), echoes the viciousness that led to Johnny's action, "The whole thing is terrible, Mrs. Boyle;

but the only way to deal with a mad dog is to destroy him" (Juno, II, p. 46). Boyle's reaction is one of irresponsible and callous indifference. Juno is remorseful about forgetting the funeral and consequently enjoying herself with singing but she is relieved that at least the gramophone was not playing. Boyle replies:

> Even if we had aself. We've nothin' to do with these things, one way or t'other. That's the Government's business, an' let them do what we're payin' them for doin' .... That's enough about them things; they don't affect us, an' we needn't give a damn. If they want a wake, well, let them have a wake. When I was a sailor, I was always resigned to meet with a wathery grave; an' if they want to be soldiers, well, there's no use o' them squealin' when they meet a soldier's fate.
> (Juno, II, p. 47)

Boyle's reaction denies the brotherhood of men and the fact that in any social community, men are interdependant and all share in the fate of each. Yet part of his statement contains a grain of truth. Too many men became soldiers without realizing the horror of war and the immediacy of pain and death. However, Joxer's glib quotation, "Let me like a soldier fall -- me breast expandin' to the ball!" undercuts this observation so that, in combination with the obviously specious reference to Boyle the sailor prepared for a watery death, any possible validity or commentary on the war is destroyed. The main emphasis in this scene is on the human quality of the

tragedy. As Juno says, "God help his poor oul' creature of a mother, for no matther whose friend or enemy he was, he was her poor son" (Juno, II, p. 48).

The funeral of Robbie Tancred makes Juno aware of the pervasiveness of the war tragedy. Her first comment in response to her husband's delegation of responsibility to the government reveals her awareness of human bonds that, in war, are all too often forgotten:

> I'd like to know how a body's not to mind these things; look at the way they're afther leavin' the people in this very house. Hasn't the whole house, nearly, been massacreed? There's young Dougherty's husband with his leg off; Mrs. Travers that had her son blew up be a mine in Inchegeela, in Co. Cork; Mrs. Mannin' that lost wan of her sons in an ambush a few weeks ago, an' now, poor Mrs. Tancred's only child gone west with his body made a collandher of. Sure, if it's not our business, I don't know whose business it is.
>
> (Juno, II, p. 47)

Her second response is not as noble, influenced as she is by her husband's insistence that violent death is the occupational hazard of the soldier and also harrassed by the continual denial of privacy and the lack of respect for the rights of the individual during the war.

> In wan way, she deserves all she got; for lately, she let th' Die-hards make an open house of th' place; an' for th' last couple of months, either when th' sun was risin' or when the sun was settin', you had C.I.D. men burstin' into your room, assin' you where were you born, where were you married, an' where would you be buried.
>
> (Juno, II, p. 47)

The third intrusion of the ravages of war is initially a comic one. Boyle has just begun to play "If you're Irish, come into the Parlour" on the gramophone only to have Needle Nugent, a tailor, come into the Boyle's parlor and chastize the group for lacking respect for "the Irish people's National regard for the dead". Juno replies with a statement that contains the driving, sustaining impulse that preserves life: "Maybe, Needle Nugent, it's nearly time we had a little less respect for the dead, an' a little more regard for the livin'" (Juno, II, p. 49).

Johnny is the personal embodiment of the destruction that the forces of death — war, treachery, envy, murder -- can wage upon a living community. He is described as being pale and drawn, with "a tremulous look of indefinite fear in his eyes. The left sleeve of his coat is empty, and he walks with a slight halt" (Juno, I, p. 8). He is generally pictured as sitting moodily or crouched [8] beside the fire. He is afraid to remain alone, afraid to sleep in the same flat on successive nights, and afraid of every knock at the door. The thunderous door-knocking episode in Act I is a powerful comment on the terror of war time conditions since all three men, Johnny, Captain Boyle, and Joxer, are afraid

to look out the window for fear of being shot:

> Johnny (... his face is anxious and his voice is tremulous). Who's that at the door; who's that at the door? Who gave that knock -- d'ye yous hear me -- are yous deaf or dhurnk or what?
> Boyle. ... How the hell do I know who 'tis? Joxer, stick your head out o' the window an' see.
> Joxer. An' mebbe get a bullet in the kisser? Ah, none o' them tricks for Joxer! It's betther to be a coward than a corpse.
> Boyle (looking cautiously out of the window). It's a fella in a thrench coat.
> (Juno, I, p. 20)

Wars are seemingly fought to uphold principles but the strife between Christian and Christian degenerates into savagery and a callous irreverence for life. Those men, often only boys, who believed firmly in the cause, had all too frequently based their allegiance on romantic sentiments and an inadequate conception of the maiming realities involved. It is the women, as represented by Juno Boyle, who, knowing the terrible price of crippling pain, hunger, and deprivation, reject heroics in favor of bread on the table, warm clothes covering the body, and money in the pocket after the rent has been paid. The viewpoints held by mother and son provide a contrast in the following exchange which occurs with Johnny's introduction to Mr. Bentham:

> Mrs. Boyle. .... My son, Mr. Bentham; he's after goin' through the mill. He was only a chiselur of a Boy Scout in Easter Week, when he got hit in the hip; and his arm was blew off in the

fight in O'Connell Street .... None can deny he done his bit for Irelan', if that's goin' to do him any good.

Johnny (boastfully). I'd do it agen, man, I'd do it agen; for a principle's a principle.

Mrs. Boyle. Ah, you lost your best principle, me boy, when you lost your arm; them's the only sort o' principles that's any good to a workin' man.

Johnny. Ireland only half free'll never be at peace while she has a son left to pull a trigger.

Mrs. Boyle. To be sure, to be sure -- no bread's a lot betther than half a loaf.

(Juno, I, p. 27)

Mrs. Boyle's arguments are totally pragmatic; a man needs two arms in order to work and provide sustenance for his family. The principle of life is the only one to which she subscribes. Johnny's responses are stock phrases, reflecting what he has been indoctrinated with and not what he himself has learned through bitter experience. His true feelings are revealed in his passionate refusal to attend a Battalion Staff meeting.

Johnny (passionately). I won't go! Haven't I done enough for Ireland! I've lost me arm, an' me hip's desthroyed so that I'll never be able to walk right agen! Good God, haven't I done enough for Ireland?

The Young Man. Boyle, no man can do enough for Ireland!

(Juno, II, p. 50)

Johnny's outburst is significantly different from his boastful posturings before Mr. Bentham. Now it is only the Mobilizer who, machine-like, automatically utters the prescribed response. Indeed, Johnny's plea to be spared anticipates the manner of Harry Heegan's prayer for the

miracle of good health in Act III of The Silver Tassie since both emerge from a background of prayer. In Juno and the Paycock, when the conversation between Johnny and the Mobilizer has ceased, one can hear faintly in the distance the funeral crowd saying a Hail Mary for Robbie Tancred, a prayer which Johnny will himself utter at the moment of his own death. Harry Heegan cries out, in the midst of the singing of the hymn Salve Regina by the convent nuns, "God of the miracles, give a poor devil a chance, give a poor devil a chance!"[9]

In her youthful idealism Mary condones Johnny's self-sacrifice, mainly because she believes that personal and collective adherence to principles will result in a better life. It is for this reason that she defends her brother against Juno's remonstrances.

> Mrs. Boyle. I don't know what's goin' to be done with him. The bullet he got in the hip in Easter Week was bad enough, but the bomb that shatthered his arm in the fight in O'Connell Street put the finishin' touch on him. I knew he was makin' a fool of himself. God knows I went down on me bended knees to him not to go agen the Free State.
>
> Mary. He stuck to his principles, an' no matther how you may argue, ma, a principle's a principle.
>
> (Juno, I, pp. 7-8)

Mary herself acts in accordance with this statement for she has gone on strike in support of a victimized fellow-

worker. Her motives are based on the principle of the matter and not on any personal feeling for the girl, of whom she had never spoken well. Juno, in her argument against the strike, presents practical problems to be overcome in order to survive.

Mrs. Boyle. I don't know why you wanted to walk out for Jennie Claffey; up to this you never had a good word for her.

Mary. What's the use of belongin' to a Trades Union if you won't stand up for your principles? Why did they sack her? It was a clear case of victimization. We couldn't let her walk the streets, could we?

Mrs. Boyle. No, of course yous couldn't — yous wanted to keep her company. Wan victim wasn't enough. When the employers sacrifice wan victim, the Trades Unions go wan betther be sacrificin' a hundred.

Mary. It doesn't mattner what you say, ma -- a principle's a principle.

Mrs. Boyle. Yis; an' when I go into oul' Murphy's tomorrow, an' he gets to know that, instead o' payin' all, I'm goin' to borry more, what'll he say when I tell him a principle's a principle? What'll we do if he refuses to give us any more on tick?

(Juno, I, pp. 7-8)

O'Casey commented on this aspect of the play in "O'Casey in Hungarian Costume", his introductory essay to the play:

> If there be a message in the play, I imagine it to be that a Civil War should be waged only for a deep and great cause .... We should, however, be careful of personal idealism; good as it may be and well-meaning, its flame in a few hearts may not give new life and new hope to the many, but dwindle into ghastly and futile funeral pyres in which many are uselessly destroyed and enormous damage done to all.[10]

One of the greatest tests of the personal idealism of many of the characters is the pregnancy of Mary. The various reactions to her misfortune reveal the true nature of those around her and, in many cases, alter our conceptions. Captain Boyle's vehemence and concern only for himself make us realize that he is not a harmless, amusing drunkard but a vicious and self-centered man. Juno's attempts at reasoning against his anger display her courage, compassion, and recognition that Captain Boyle shares in Mary's guilt.

Boyle. Oh, isn't this a nice thing to come on top o' me, an' the state I'm in! A pretty show I'll be to Joxer an' that oul' wan, Madigan! Amn't I afther goin' through enough without havin' to go through this!

Mrs. Boyle. What you an' I'll have to go through 'll be nothin' to what poor Mary'll have to go through; for you an' me is middlin' old, an' most of our years is spent; but Mary'll have maybe forty years to face an' handle, an' every wan of them'll be tainted with a bitther memory.

Boyle. Where is she? Where is she till I tell her off? I'm tellin' you when I'm done with her she'll be a sorry girl!

Mrs. Boyle. .... You'll say nothin' to her, Jack; ever since she left school she's earned her livin', an' your fatherly care never throubled the poor girl.

Boyle. Gwan, take her part agen her father! But I'll let you see whether I'll say nothin' to her or no! Her an' her readin'! That's more o' th' blasted nonsense that has the house fallin' down on top of us! What did th' likes of her, born in a tenement house, want with readin'? Her readin's afther bringin' her to a nice pass — oh, it's madnin', madnin', madnin', madnin'!

Mrs. Boyle. When she comes back say nothin' to her, Jack, or she'll leave this place.

Boyle. Leave this place! Ay, she'll leave this place, an' quick too!

Mrs. Boyle. If Mary goes, I'll go with her.

Boyle. Well, go with her! Well, go, th' pair o' yous! I lived before I seen yous, an' I can live when yous are gone. Isn't this a nice thing to come rollin' in on top o' me afther all your prayin' to St. Anthony an' The Little Flower! An' she's a Child o' Mary, too — I wonder what'll the nuns think of her now? An' it'll be bellows'd all over th' disthrict before you could say Jack Robinson; an' whenever I'm seen they'll whisper, 'That's th' father of Mary Boyle that had the kid be th' swank she used to go with; d'ye know, d'ye know?' To be sure they'll know -- more about it than I will meself!

(Juno, III, pp. 61-62)

Johnny's reaction is very similar, dwelling upon "the disgrace" that Mary has brought upon the family. Upon seeing Mary, he has only bitter words for her: "It's a wondher you're not ashamed to show your face here, afther what has happened" (Juno, III, p. 65), and, after learning that she has told her former admirer of her pregnancy, "Are you burnin' to tell every one of the shame you've brought on us?" (Juno, III, p. 68) His tormenting of Mary and his inflexible attitude is surprising since he has brought greater shame and guilt upon himself, his treachery and violation of trust having brought about the murder of his former comrade, Robbie Tancred. Furthermore, his lack of charity towards Mary does not make him deserving of

mercy from the Irregulars.

Even the humanity of Jerry Devine, the earnest young labor leader, proves wanting when his ideals are tested by reality. O'Casey had initially described him as ambitious but slightly inadequate. "He is a type, becoming very common now in the Labour Movement, of a mind knowing enough to make the mass of his associates, who know less, a power, and too little to broaden that power for the benefit of all" (Juno, I, p. 9). Now, coming in the knowledge that Bentham has left Mary (this is all that Juno has revealed in her attempt to at once protect Mary's reputation and also give her an opportunity to marry), Jerry pleads for her love:

> What does it matther what has happened? We are young enough to be able to forget all those things .... Mary, Mary, I am pleading for your love. With Labour, Mary, humanity is above everything; we are the Leaders in the fight for a new life. I want to forget Bentham, I want to forget that you left me -- even for a while.
>
> (Juno, III, p. 66)

These are noble, tender words, exactly what Jerry ought to have repeated after learning the full extent of Mary's involvement with Bentham. Instead, he displays the shallowness of his moral character.

> Jerry (poignantly). Surely to God, Mary, you don't mean you don't mean that ... that... that...
> Mary. Now you know all, Jerry; now you know all!
> Jerry. My God, Mary, have you fallen as low as that?
> Mary. Yes, Jerry, as you say, I have fallen as low as that.

Jerry. I didn't mean it that way, Mary ... it came on me so sudden, that I didn't mind what I was sayin' .... I never expected this -- your mother never told me .... I'm sorry ... God knows, I'm sorry for you, Mary.

Mary. Let us say no more, Jerry; I don't blame you for thinkin' it's terrible ... I suppose it is .... Everybody'll think the same ... it's only as I expected -- your humanity is just as narrow as the humanity of the others.

Jerry. I'm sorry, all the same .... I shouldn't have troubled you .... I wouldn't if I'd known .... If I can do anything for you ... Mary ... I will.

(Juno, III, pp. 66-67)

The reactions of her father, brother, and former lover to her pregnancy radically alter Mary's vision of life, which before had consisted of youthful idealism and hope. She now sees life as having the potential to be beautiful but instead, being barren and agonized because of mankind's denial of the natural impulses of life. Mary expresses her realization of the paramount domination of the death forces in her recitation of the verses which Jerry read during his lecture on "Humanity's Strife with Nature". It is significant that Jerry has no recollection of having quoted this passage:

An' we felt the power that fashion'd
All the lovely things we saw,
That created all the murmur
Of an everlasting law,
Was a hand of force an' beauty,
With an eagle's tearin' claw.

Then we saw our globe of beauty
Was an ugly thing as well,
A hymn divine whose chorus
Was an agonizin' yell;

Like the story of a demon,
That an angel had to tell;

Like a glowin' picture by a
Hand unsteady, brought to ruin;
Like her craters, if their deadness
Could give life unto the moon;
Like the agonizing horror
Of a violin out of tune.

(Juno, III, p. 67)

Only Juno exhibits genuine sympathy and regard for Mary in her behavior towards her daughter. She covers Mary with a shawl, spares her the agony of seeing her dead brother, and plans to work with Mary for the sake of the baby. Juno bears her tragedies of an assassinated son, a pregnant unwed daughter, and an irresponsible husband with courage and dignity. O'Casey wrote of her:

> Juno is a true hero, though unhonored and unsung, like thousands more, and this heroism is everlasting, for it's from God's heart and is the central pulse of nature. I have known many such courageous women, young and old alike. The greatest saints have not been canonized. [11]

The death of Johnny helps Juno realize more fully the community and kinship of suffering that binds all people together. In death, all man-made labels are erased, leaving only the humanity visible. Juno laments:

> Maybe I didn't feel sorry enough for Mrs. Tancred when her poor son was found as Johnny's been found now -- because he was a Diehard! Ah, why didn't I remember that then he wasn't a Diehard or a Stater, but only a poor dead son. It's well I remember all that she said -- an' it's my turn to say it now.
>
> (Juno, III, p. 71)

Mary rails that there isn't a God; "if there was He wouldn't let these things happen!" (Juno, III, p. 70), but Juno places the responsibility squarely on man's shoulders: "These things have nothin' to do with the Will o' God. Ah, what can God do agen the stupidity o' men!" Or, one may well ask, against the callousness of man? The policemen, impatiently waiting to escort Juno to the hospital to identify Johnny, show their insensitivity towards the suffering of the mother only to be rebuked by Mrs. Madigan's critical appraisal of the state of law and order in Dublin.

> A Rough Voice shouting from below. Are yous goin' to keep us waitin' for yous all night?
>
> Mrs. Madigan (going to the door and shouting down). Take your hour, there, take your hour! If yous are in such a hurry, skip off, then, for nobody wants you here — if they did yous wouldn't be found. For you're the same as yous were undher the British Government — never where yous are wanted! As far as I can see, the Polis as Polis, in this city, is Null an' Void!
>
> (Juno, III, p. 71)

The greatest portrayal of the irresponsibility of the male characters occurs in the epilogue, the rowdy drunkenness of which contrasts painfully with the poignant sorrow of Juno's prayer that God should take away men's hearts of stone and give them hearts of flesh. The epilogue is at once the comic and the tragic highlight of the play.[12] The furniture men have left a

barren stage, symbol of the disintegrated family and country and confirmation of the final validity of Captain Boyle's favorite refrain, "...th' whole worl's... in a terr ... ible state o' ... chassis!" The symbolism is particularly apparent in Boyle's drunken comment, "The counthry'll have to steady itself ... it's goin' ... to hell .... Where'r all ... the chairs ... gone to ... steady itself, Joxer .... Chairs'll ... have to ... steady themselves ..... No matther .... what anyone may ... say ... Irelan' sober ... is Irelan' ... free" (Juno, III, p. 72).

At the close of the drama, incurable cowardice and social decay are denounced and rejected. It is evident that political planning or patriotic sacrifices or bardic romances will not rescue the lower classes from their degrading surroundings; unified exertion of the common people themselves will create a more glorious future. The sufferings of the Boyle family have been perpetuated by Captain Boyle's shiftless irresponsibility and myth-making and by Juno's long indulgence of his idleness. Johnny rebukes his mother for her irresponsibility: "You're to blame yourself for a gradle of it — givin' him his own way in everything, an' never assin' to check him, no matther what he done. Why didn't you look afther

th' money? Why..." (Juno, III, p. 64). The threat of destruction inspires the women of Juno and the Paycock to assert themselves positively and collectively. It is in this play that the concept of leaving behind the inadequate, the weak, and the cowardly (one which will be developed and dealt with more abstractly in The Silver Tassie and in the later plays) is first presented. To the audience, Juno and Mary's prospects appear significantly brighter when, in Act III, they abandon Captain Boyle in the full realization that "he'll be hopeless till the end of his days" (Juno, III, p. 71). Furthermore, Juno adds as a searing indictment of the men in the play that the child, although fatherless, will "have what's far betther -- it'll have two mothers" (Juno, III, p. 71). Juno's self-assertion demonstrates that as long as the people willingly reconcile themselves to misfortune, they will remain subjected. Extending this point, one can perceive from the action of the play that without the commitment of the common people themselves, the blood shed for an abstract cause dimly understood will forever be in vain.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS

As in O'Casey's two earlier plays, war serves as a background to the action in The Plough and the Stars but significantly, the influence of wide-spread social chaos is much more pronounced. Now, we have an entire city caught in the throes of political upheaval. The tenement house serves as a microcosm of Ireland; within its walls, it shelters a commandant in the Irish Citizen Army, a pamphlet-quoting Communist, a Protestant woman, loyal to Britain and with a son in the trenches, a consumptive child, laborers, a drink-loving carpenter, and women whose visions of reality and the possibilities of life differ markedly from the vain illusions of their men. Other classes besides the lower come into contact with the tenement; in Act III, a fashionably dressed woman, who had thought "the howl thing was a joke" (The Plough and the Stars, III, p. 189)[1] and had gone visiting a friend, now comes near the tenement house seeking both guidance and protection. Her presence shows that the fear and uncertainty has extended into the middle and upper classes, whose generally inviolable security war manages to shatter. The image of the tenement house as a beleagured island

besieged by the forces of external violence becomes more forceful with each succeeding act. In the first act, the strife is on a purely personal level, comic in the case of Peter Flynn and the Covey, frightening in its potential explosiveness in the case of Bessie Burgess and Nora Clitheroe. But the external, alienating strife is already upsetting the relationships between the dwellers. Bessie is abusive to the men who fight against England, the country for whom her son is risking his life in battle. The demonstrativeness in love between Nora and Jack has diminished, at first because Jack is restlessly eager to attend the Great Demonstration. Later, upon learning that Nora has hidden from him news of his promotion in the Citizen's Army, he handles her roughly, speaking to her harshly and menacingly. By Act III, the war being waged in the streets near the tenement and in Act IV, the residents have sought refuge from the snipers' bullets and the impending danger in Bessie Burgess' attic flat. The last scene is a symbolic representation of the occupation of Ireland; the British soldiers drink Nora's tea and ironically sing "Keep the 'owme fires burning" while Dublin is burning.

The earliest indications not only of military strife but also of the discrepancy between Nora's hopeful yet more realistic vision of life and the men's vain-

gloriously unrealistic conceptions of life are contained in the opening stage setting in Act I. The tenement house is an example of graciousness ruined by poverty, neglect, and a disregard for the finer expressions of domestic life. O'Casey describes it as "a fine old Georgian house, struggling for its life against the assaults of time, and the more savage assaults of the tenants" (The Plough, I, p. 135). Now it has become, in Nora's words, "Vaults ... that are hidin' th' dead, instead of homes that are shel-therin' th' livin'" (The Plough, I, p. 138). Nora's rooms, however, are an attempt to reintroduce beauty as an integral part of daily life. The pictures on her walls are reproductions of "The Sleeping Venus", "The Gleaners", and "The Angelus". On a chest of drawers stands "a green bowl filled with scarlet dahlias and white chrysanthemums" (The Plough, I, p. 135). To O'Casey, a vase with flowers is a symbol of life; without flowers, it is representative of sterility and death. A fire burns in the hearth, a symbol to both O'Casey and his mother of the warmth and love that is an essential ingredient in home life. There are, however, subtly jarring anticipations of future up-heavals and motifs that will be developed more fully later in the action. A huge cavalry sword is lying on the table. Over the fireplace, a picture of the splendidly uniformed

Robert Emmet is hanging, an anticipation of the vain obsession (on the part of the men) with the magnificence of their uniforms. Through the window can be seen "the flame of a gasolene lamp giving light to the workmen repairing the street. Occasionally can be heard the clang of crowbars striking the setts" (The Plough, I, p. 136). The light and the staccato beat of metal both contrast sharply with and anticipate the rifle and machine-gun fire and the glare in the window from the burning city of Dublin at the end of the play.

The tenement characters introduced to us at this juncture in the play are also at discord, a reflection of the strife common between factions in Ireland. Fluther, though described with an element of humor, does have a tendency towards violence. Under his left eye is a scar and his nose is misshapen because of a fight long ago. "In an argument he usually fills with sound and fury signifying a row" (The Plough, I, p. 136). Tension is established immediately with the silent interaction between him and Peter Flynn whose

> ...face invariably wears a look of animated anguish, mixed with irritated defiance, as if everybody was at war with him, and he at war with everybody. He is cocking his head in a way that suggests resentment at the presence of Fluther, who pays no attention to him, apparently, but is really furtively watching him.
>
> (The Plough, I, p. 136)

It is not until the appearance of the Covey on-stage that the prevailing tension explodes into physical strife on an individual scale, reflecting the national conflict that will develop in the later course of the play. The Covey serves a dual function in the dramatic action. Irritable, he creates much of the anti-heroic bickering in the play, evidence of the discordant factions, disillusionment, and frustration in Ireland. Many of his panaceas for Ireland's ills are parroted from Jerensky's Thesis on the Origin, Development and Consolidation of the Evolutionary Idea of the Proletariat; he is thus himself open to satire. He does, however, make valuable and accurate criticisms of the religious and patriotic pretenses that others hold. His adherance, like O'Casey's, is wholly to socialism. Political freedom is to him valueless if there is no economic freedom. If war is to be fought, then it should be waged, not for religious freedom or patriotic sentiments, but for "th' economic emancipation of th' proletariat" (The Plough, III, p. 170). He makes his point clearly in the bitterness of the following exchange:

> The Covey. They're bringin' nice disgrace on that banner now.
> Clitheroe (remonstratively). How are they bringin' disgrace on it?
> The Covey (snappily). Because it's a Labour flag, an'

> was never meant for politics .... What does th' design of th' field plough, bearin' on it th' stars of th' heavenly plough, mean, if it's not Communism? It's a flag that should only be used when we're buildin' th' barricades to fight for a Workers' Republic!
> (The Plough, I, p. 117)

The Covey effectively unmasks the shallowness of religious and nationalistic pretentions in his debate with Fluther:

> The Covey (with contempt). Th' job's stopped. They've been mobilized to march in th' demonstration tonight undher th' Plough an' th' Stars. Didn't you hear them cheerin', th' mugs! They have to renew their political baptismal vows to be faithful in seculo seculorum.
> Fluther (forgetting his fear in his indignation). There's no reason to bring religion into it. I think we ought to have as great a regard for religion as we can, so as to keep it out of as many things as possible.[2]
> The Covey. .... Oh, you're one o' the boys that climb into religion as high as a short Mass on Sunday mornin's? I suppose you'll be singin' songs o' Sion an' songs o' Tara at th' meetin', too.
> Fluther. We're all Irishmen, anyhow; aren't we?
> The Covey (with hand outstretched, and in a professional tone). Look here, comrade, there's no such thing as an Irishman, or an Englishman, or a German or a Turk; we're all only human bein's. Scientifically speakin', it's all a question of the accidental gatherin' together of mollycewels an' atoms.
> (The Plough, I, pp. 142-143)

The Covey's final words here are soon confirmed by Peter's unconsciously humorous misapplication of Christian principles to unchristian sentiments. After the Covey has childishly and maliciously vexed him, Peter responds with a series of gross contradictions and with a threat of physical violence:

Peter (plaintively, with his eyes looking up at the ceiling). I'll say nothin' .... I'll leave you to th' day when th' all-pitiful, all-merciful, all-lovin' God'll be handin' you to th' angels to be rievin' an' roastin' you, tearin' an' tormentin' you, burnin' an' blastin' you!

The Covey. Aren't you th' little malignant oul' bastard, you lemon-whiskered oul' swine!

(Peter runs to the sword, draws it, and makes for the Covey, who dodges him around the table; Peter has no intention of striking, but the Covey wants to take no chance.)

The Covey (dodging). Fluther, hold him, there. It's a nice thing to have a lunatic like this lashin' around with a lethal weapon!

(The Plough, I, pp. 145 - 146)

The Covey's and Peter's unsuppressible hostilities and the former's observation of Peter as "a lunatic ... lashin' around with a lethal weapon" are examples of social criticisms that work on both national and personal levels. Further criticism is delivered in the satiric presentation of Peter's obsession with his elaborate uniform. In his depiction of the vanity of the "patriots", particularly apparent in their attention to lavishly colored and embroidered uniforms and to the levels of military rank, O'Casey condemns the misconceptions of war that men hold. War does not consist of pomp, ceremony, splendor, and effortless victories over the enemy but instead saturates life with blood, suffering, deprivation, and death. In the first act, Peter Flynn, in preparation for that evening's torchlight parade, has dressed himself in the

uniform of the Irish National Foresters: "green coat, gold braided; white breeches, top boots, frilled shirt .... slouch hat with the white ostrich plume, and ... sword" (The Plough, I, p. 150). Throughout the act, various deflating comments on this uniform are made. The cavalry sword, with "all th' gold lace an' th' fine figaries on it", deflates and reduces Peter's stature; Mrs. Gogan observes, "Sure it's twiced too big for him," and Fluther seconds her by replying, "A - ah; it's a baby's rattle he ought to have" (The Plough, I, p. 140). The frills on the shirt inspire Mrs. Gogan to compare it to a woman's petticoat or the "Lord Mayor's nightdhress" (The Plough, I, p. 141). The Covey delivers the final pronouncement on the entire uniform when he jeers that Peter looks "like th' illegitimate son of an illegitimate child of a corporal in th' Mexican army" (The Plough, I, p. 152)! While subduing a conflict between Peter and the Covey, during which Peter has been chasing the Covey with a sword, Nora accents Peter's immaturity and, by implication, that of men in general, when she remonstrates, "If you attempt to wag that sword of yours at anybody again, it'll have to be taken off you an' put in a safe place away from babies that don't know th' danger o' them things" (The Plough, I, p. 148). After tea, urging Peter

to attend the meeting so that she and Jack will be alone, she again highlights Peter's childishness by buckling on his sword and putting on his plumed hat with the words, "Now your hat's on, your house is thatched; off you pop!" (The Plough, I, p. 153)

The foolish desire for uniforms while planning participation in what was essentially guerrilla warfare was berated by Sean O'Casey while he was in the Irish Citizen Army. In his third autobiographical volume, Drums under the Windows, O'Casey presented the views of those clamouring for uniforms and also refuted them with his own arguments. The persuasions used by those in favor of uniforms are detailed below:

> Neither the Army nor the Volunteers was satisfied with arming: they wanted uniforms .... Many wanted to be seen going about the narrow streets of their home homeland, clad in green trousers, yellow coat, red busby with a blue plume; or black cutaway coat faced with purple, white pantaloons, top-boots, and brass helmet with a crimson hackle curving over all. Bravery was to be twin brother to bravura. The Citizen Army, more wisely, wanted to be so that they could be a movement, they said, within the meaning of International Law. In the meantime, till money was flusher, citizen soldiers were to wear an armlet ... of St. Patrick's blue, the old Irish colour, according to Madame Markievicz, and each officer was to wear a red one. These, it was said, would safely classify them as belligerents, and so entitle them to the privileges of International Law when in battle, or as prisoners of war.[3]

Later on in the debate on the wisdom of having uniforms, O'Casey supplied the following dialogue:

> — This is wasting time! said Captain White testily. Without some kind of uniform, the men will look slovenly, and feel it. They'll have no respect for the ideals of the Army, and won't have an incentive to keep together.
>
> ... Jim Larkin .... agreed with Captain White. Uniforms will give the men a sound sense of espirit de corps, and one of homogeneous unity, encourage the practice of discipline, and instill a pride into the men they couldn't possibly feel in their everyday clothing; and a wild chorus of hear-hears from the men showed they agreed with Jim too. [4]

O'Casey's counter-arguments demonstrated that the Irish militants did not anticipate the tremendous cost of their violent uprising against England and that their intoxicated view of the heroic past of Ireland blinded their vision of the imminent future. The Irish dramatist's invective is directed against the vanity and folly of uniforms and of the incessant thirst for display. O'Casey reports that he

> ... argued incessantly and insistently that neither uniforms nor brassards would be of use to them in securing treatment of belligerents when waging war against the British. You would simply be, he said, no more to them than decorated rebels. On the contrary, they will be a greater danger in so far as they would unmistakably reveal the presence of a foe. They would be far safer in their ordinary clothes, for, if caught, they could pretend they were there by accident; whereas the uniform or gaudy brassard would show they were there by intention. He put Shaw's comparison before them of Ireland's fight with England as a perambulator up against a Pickford van; and tried to point out that their military art must be that of strike and dodge; dodge and strike....
>
> — I say, went on Sean, that the question of belligerency doesn't exist for us. We will be rebels; worse — we will be traitors, even terrorists to

> England, and she will strike without stop or mercy. It is for us, as far as we can, to force her by dodgery to strike oftenest at the air. If we flaunt signs about of what we are, and what we do, we'll get it on the head and round the neck. As for a uniform -- that would be worst of all. We couldn't hope to hide ourselves anywhere clad in green and gold .... Caught in a dangerous corner, there would be a chance in your workaday clothes. You could slip among the throng, carelessly, with few the wiser. In uniform, the crowd would shrink aside to show you, and the enemy will pounce. In your everyday rags you could, if the worst came, hang your rifle on a lamp-post and go your way. But you couldn't take your uniform off, for even if you did, a man walking about in his shirt would look as suspicious as one going about in a uniform.[5]

Brennan's experiences in Act IV of The Plough and the Stars demonstrate the validity of this argument. In order to avoid being seized by the English, he has had to discard both the uniform he wore and the flag he carried; he admits too that if he had not dressed himself as a civilian, he would have never reached the safety of the tenement. O'Casey's sentiments are embodied in Mrs. Gogan's dark foreboding:

> The Foresthers' is a gorgeous dhress! I don't think I've seen nicer, mind you, in a pantomime.... Th' loveliest part of th' dhress, I think, is th' ostrichess plume .... When yous are goin' along, an' I see them wavin' an' noddin' an' waggin', I seem to be lookin' at each of yous hangin' at th' end of a rope, your eyes bulgin' an' your legs twistin' an' jerkin', gaspin' an' gaspin' for breath while yous are thryin' to die for Ireland!
>
> (The Plough, II, p. 167)

Jack Clitheroe also exhibits a passion for rank and

uniform, placing greater importance upon these two incidentals than on the cause itself. Displaying the childishness that seems to plague all the men in this play, Jack has abandoned the cause, not for the serious, ideological principles that a man like O'Casey had, but because the Citizen Army failed to grant him a promotion. His vanity is comically pictured in the following exchange:

> Fluther. How is it that Clitheroe himself, now, doesn't have anythin' to do with th' Citizen Army? A couple o' months ago, an' you'd hardly ever see him without his gun, an' th' Red Hand o' Liberty Hall in his hat.
>
> Mrs. Gogan. Just because he wasn't made a Captain of. He wasn't goin' to be in anything where he couldn't be conspishuous. He was so cocksure o' bein made one that he bought a Sam Browne belt, an' was always puttin' it on an' standin' at th' door showing it off, till th' man came an' put out th' street lamps on him. God, I think he used to bring it to bed with him!
>
> (The Plough, I, pp. 139-140)

Although Clitheroe's vanity evokes mirth, it also contains underlying tragic implications. Clitheroe's lack of dedication is a major flaw in his character; another is his lack of firmness, his inability to attain, by distinguished service, the authority he craves. His weakness is revealed in his inadequate defence of Nora against Bessie Burgess' attack. Before and during Clitheroe's presence, it is Fluther who physically separates the two women and leads Bessie to the tenement

flat door. Clitheroe's contribution consists of promised retaliations that fail to carry a ring of conviction with them. Listening to Clitheroe's glib, short, and rather restrained reprimand considering that Nora reported that Bessie "flew at me like a tiger, an' thried to guzzle me!", one receives the impression that Clitheroe's words are words only, backed by no possibility of present or future action.

> Clitheroe (going to door and speaking to Bessie). Get up to your own place, Mrs. Burgess, and don't you be interferin' with my wife, or it'll be th' worse for you .... Go on, go on! ....
> Clitheroe (going over to Nora, and putting his arm round her). There, don't mind that old bitch, Nora, darling; I'll soon put a stop to her interferin'.
> Nora. Some day or another, when I'm here be meself, she'll come in an' do somethin' desperate.
> Clitheroe (kissing her). Oh, sorra fear of her doin' anythin' desperate. I'll talk to her to-morrow when she's sober. A taste o' me mind that'll shock her into the sensibility of behavin' herself!
>
> (The Plough, I, p. 150)

The preparations for war provide many opportunities for the satisfaction of masculine vanities. Clitheroe, relishing the spectacle and display of a parade demonstration, says enviously, "To-night is th' first chance that Brennan has got of showing himself off since they made a Captain of him -- why, God only knows. It'll be a treat to see him swankin' it at th' head of the Citizen Army carryin' th' flag of the Plough an' th' Stars...." (The

Plough, I, p. 151). This childish delight with the mere frivolities of a serious situation has dangerous and disruptive potential as later developments of the play clearly reveal.

Much of the first act, certainly that preceding and including the tea scene, reveals the pervading extent of public intrusion upon private lives. Tenement dwellers (Mrs. Gogan and Bessie Burgess are obvious examples) enter and leave the Clitheroe apartment almost at will. Mrs. Gogan's overwhelming curiosity drives her to open the draper's parcel which is meant for Nora and also to try the hat on; while speaking, she compulsively examines each object, completely oblivious to the ill-mannered nature of her actions.[6] Other references to the lack of privacy and to the uproar which results from the chronic tenement overcrowding occur in the act. Bessie Burgess' tirade against Nora as the latter is testing the new lock Fluther has installed for her reveals the extent to which noise and the congestion of people make inroads into privacy.

> Bessie. Puttin' a new lock on her door ... afraid her poor neighbours ud break through an' steal.... (In a loud tone) Maybe, now, they're a damn sight more honest than your ladyship ... checkin' th' children playin' on th' stairs ... gettin' on th' nerves of your ladyship.... Complainin' about Bessie Burgess singin' her

hymns at night, when she has a few up.... (She comes in half-way on the threshold, and screams) Bessie Burgess'll sing whenever she damn well likes!

(Nora tries to shut the door, but Bessie violently shoves it in, and, gripping Nora by the shoulders, shakes her.)

Bessie. You little over-dressed throllop, for one pin I'll paste th' white face o' you!

(The Plough, I, p. 149)

Peter and the Covey also disrupt the Clitheroe's home life. Economic necessity results in the four sharing the flat but, as the frustrated Nora laments, "Oh, can I not turn me back but th' two o' yous are at it like a pair o' fightin' cocks!" She goes on firmly, "Jack'll be in any minute, an' I'm not goin' to have th' quiet of his evenin' tossed about in an everlastin' uproar between you an' Uncle Pether" (The Plough, I, p. 148).

The sudden removal of all uproar is another dramatically potent device that intensifies our awareness of the goldfish-bowl existence which Nora and Jack are living. Nora observes to Jack, "How quiet th' house is now; they must be all out" (The Plough, I, p. 155). But just as their anxieties and their tenement neighbours intrude upon their privacy and peace, so also do Jack's vanity, frustrated ambitions, and the patriotic call to insurrection. Finally alone together, Nora and Jack at first experience difficulty in establishing an atmosphere of harmonious concord because Jack's dreams of glory and

heroism prevent him from appreciating and responding to his wife's charms.

(Clitheroe sits down in the lounge, lights a cigarette, and looks thoughtfully into the fire. Nora takes the things from the table, placing them on the chest of drawers. There is a pause, then she swiftly comes over to him and sits beside him.

Nora (softly). A penny for them, Jack!

Clitheroe. Me? Oh, I was thinkin' of nothing.

Nora. You were thinkin' of th' ... meetin' ... Jack. When we were courtin' an' I wanted you to go, you'd say, 'Oh, to hell with meetin's, ' an' that you felt lonely in cheerin' crowds when I was absent. An' we weren't a month married when you began that you couldn't keep away from them.

Clitheroe. Oh, that's enough about th' meetin'. It looks as if you wanted me to go th' way you're talkin'. You were always at me to give up th' Citizen Army, an' I gave it up; surely that ought to satisfy you.

Nora. Ay, you gave it up -- because you got th' sulks when they didn't make a Captain of you. It wasn't for my sake, Jack.

(The Plough, I, p. 153)

During the process of Jack and Nora's creation of their private world, during which Jack must battle with his sense of nonparticipation in events of crucial significance, the violent, brutal outside world makes a second forcible intrusion, permanently destroying the companionship implied in the sharing of a cigarette and the idyllic happiness of the song, "When You said You Loved Only Me". The savage outside now has a physical embodiment, Captain Brennan, who brings the Citizen Army's mobilization order. This message

and news of his promotion to Commandant a fortnight previously, transforms Clitheroe from husband to soldier, from lover to stranger. O'Casey's stage directions chart the ruthlessly unfeeling violence with which Clitheroe suddenly regards and treats his wife. His voice becomes hard, angry, fierce; he now considers the amorous "little red-lipp'd Nora" description of his wife to be "nonsense". Physically, he rejects her embraces, removing her arms from around him, rejects her pleas to remain with her, and upon learning that she burned the letter bearing news of his promotion, threatens her with violence if ever she should repeat her actions. Their parting is filled with bitterness.

> Clitheroe (fiercely). You burned it, did you? (He grips her arm) Well, me good lady --
> Nora. Let go -- you're hurtin' me!
> Clitheroe. You deserve to be hurt .... Any letter that comes to me for th' future, take care that I get it.... D'ye hear -- take care that I get it!
>
> (He goes to the chest of drawers and takes out a Sam Browne belt, which he puts on, and then puts a revolver in the holster. He puts on his hat, and looks towards Nora. While this dialogue is proceeding, and while Clitheroe prepares himself, Brennan softly whistles 'The Soldiers' Song'.
>
> Clitheroe (at the door, about to go out). You needn't wait up for me; if I'm in at all, it won't be before six in th' morning.
> Nora (bitterly). I don't care if you never come back!
>
> (The Plough, I, p. 158)

The details of costume and the whistled song that pervade the background are of importance for, used as they

are to strengthen Clitheroe's resolve against his wife and for the Cause and also his image of himself, they emphasize the tawdry baubles that entice men into risking their lives and those whom they love for a cause they barely understand. It would seem that a uniform, a Sam Browne belt with a revolver in its holster, a military rank, and a rousing song are all that is needed for a man to overthrow his reason and deny life. As Nora perceptively realizes, the cause of much suffering and violence in the world is the unthinking, childish vanity of the men.

> Is General Connolly an' th' Citizen Army goin' to be your only care? Is your home goin' to be only a place to rest in? Am I goin' to be only somethin' to provide merrymakin' at night for you? Your vanity'll be th' ruin of you an' me yet ... That's what's movin' you: because they've made an officer of you, you'll make a glorious cause of what you're doin', while your little red-lipp'd Nora can go on sittin' here, makin' a companion of th' loneliness of th' night!
> (The Plough, I, p. 158).

There are two forces struggling for possession of a man's soul in this play: one is unthinking, hating Death that lures men to war; the other is the impulse to Life, personified by "little red-lipp'd" Nora. However, the fate of all the people in the play is controlled by war, a repressive, disordered, shattering social madness. The life-sustaining forces are deserted with Clitheroe's decision to participate in the war; little red-lipped Nora

must sit alone, "makin' a companion of th' loneliness of th' night". The tenement house is deserted save for two lonely women, Nora and Bessie Burgess, and a child, Mollser, who passively await the inevitable doom which Bessie's biblical incantation forsees:

> There's th' men marchin' out into th' dhread dimness o' danger, while th' lice is crawlin' about feedin' on th' fatness o' the land! But yous'll not escape from th' arrow that flieth be night, or th' sickness that wasteth be day .... An ladyship an' all, as some o' them may be, they'll be scattered abroad, like th' dust in th' darkness.
>
> (The Plough, I, pp. 159-160)

Outside the silent, brooding house, a regiment of marching soldiers passes by, the men, in good health and spirits and as yet unmaimed, lustily singing "It's a Long Way to Tipperary". As R. Ayling notes, "Marches and countermarches, whether on or off stage, give the impression of a world split into opposing armed camps." [7] No one can escape the destructive madness of war. Mollser, slowly dying from consumption, delivers one of the central questions of this pacifist play, a question meant for all to ponder, "Is there anybody goin', Mrs. Clitheroe, with a titther o' sense?" (The Plough, I, p. 160)

The structure of Act II points up the disjunction of society and personal relationships that is of major importance in the play. In the satiric and tragic implications of the juxtaposition of beer and lust in the pub

with the inflammatory and momentarily rousing patriotism just outside the pub, O'Casey presents an image of a reversal of man's ambitions, a reversal brought about by man's vanities, fears, and lack of commitment to the ideal.

In "Hora Novissima", the tenth chapter of Drums under the Windows, O'Casey rhetorically asks:

> Who would be the first to make an army out of these active and diligent dry bones? Who the first to breathe into them [the people] a breath from the flames of endeavour and strife and defiance? Whose lips would first be touched by a red coal from God's altar? Who would be daring enough to snatch a flame from the burning bush and light the land with it.[8]

The second act provides the answer -- the orator, presented expressionistically by means of a silhouette against the bar-room window and his pervading voice. Despite his physical separation from the action of the play and, indeed, his physical insubstantiality, the orator both controls the mood of the act and expresses the religious elements fused into the fervor of patriotism. The events in the play, and the experiences and attitudes of the common people undermine the fevered vanities of romantically inclined patriots. Indeed, the vanity portrayed in Act II is a dangerous extension and outcome of the rather childish vanities evident in the first act. O'Casey himself refers to vanity as being a common denominator in all men, but more ominous in those whose aspirations embrace or affect

others. Writing of The Plough and the Stars, he notes:

> There are many-sided vanities in the work: of the Covey, of Peter Flynn, of the brave Bessie, of the especially brave Fluther, of Jack Clitheroe and his companion captain. We all have some vanity or other, but mostly innocent ones, remaining innocent so long as we refuse to allow them to destroy our fine qualities. But the 'Orator' is not vain; he is dangerously sincere; so sure that he is ready to kill or be killed for his Ideal as many great men were -- Washington, Lincoln, Koscuisko.[9]

Throughout the excerpts that we hear of the Orator's address, it is the juxtaposition of the words to the events occuring in the pub that lends irony and satire to the speaker's professed ideals. His voice is first heard as an interruption of Rosie Redmond's bitter complaints that the meeting is ruining her livelihood.

> There isn't much notice taken of a pretty petticoat of a night like this .... They're all in a holy mood. Th' solemn-lookin' dials on th' whole o' them an' they marchin' to th' meetin'. You'd think they were th' glorious company of th' Saints, an' th' noble army of martyrs thrampin' through th' sthreets of paradise. They're all thinkin' of higher things than a girl's garthers.
> (The Plough, II, pp. 161-162)

It is then that the orator's ideals lead him to present war as a religious ritual; he maintains that bloodshed will, as does baptism, cleanse and sanctify, and also claims, in an oblique reference to girls like Rosie who, in times of war are no longer uppermost in the attentions of men, that the uprising will confirm manhood and virility:

> It is a glorious thing to see arms in the hands of Irishmen. We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the sight of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the use of arms .... Bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nature that regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood .... There are many things more horrible than bloodshed, and slavery is one of them!
>
> (The Plough, II, p. 162)

These stirring words [10] initially affect both Rosie, who calls them "th' sacred thruth" and the barman listening with her, who summarizes the reactions of the crowd in his response, "If I was only a little younger, I'd be plungin' mad into th' middle of it!" (The Plough, II, p. 162)

After each of the three excerpts of his speech that the voice of the orator booms into the pub, there follow group responses to the words and sentiments expressed; each of these group dramas reflect different attitudes towards his rhetoric. The first reaction is that of the tumultuous emotional passion that has swept Peter and Fluther away. They are, as O'Casey notes in his stage directions, "hot, and full and hasty with the things they have seen and heard". Comically, the only actions to which the oration seems to have stirred them are drinking beer and sputtering enthusiastic bravura.

> Peter (sputteringly to Barman). Two halves ... (To Fluther) A meetin' like this always makes me feel as if I could dhrink Loch Erinn dhry!
> Fluther. You couldn't feel any way else at a time like

this when th' spirit of a man is pulsin' to be out fightin' for th' thruth with his feet thremblin' on th' way, maybe to th' gallows, an' his ears tinglin' with th' faint, far-away sound of burstin' rifle-shots that'll maybe whip th' last little shock o' life out of him that's left lingerin' in his body!

Peter. I felt a burnin' lump in me throat when I heard th' band playin' 'The Soldiers' Song', rememberin' last hearin' it marchin' in military formation with th' people starin' on both sides as us, carryin' with us th' pride an' resolution o' Dublin to th' grave of Wolfe Tone .... (hurriedly to the Barman) Two more, Tom! .... (To Fluther) Th' memory of all th' things that was done, an' all th' things that was suffered be th' people, was boomin' in me brain.... Every nerve in me body was quiverin' to do somethin' desperate!

Fluther. Jammed as I was in th' crowd, I listened to th' speeches pattherin' on th' people's head, like rain fallin' on th' corn; every derogatory thought went out o' me mind, an' I said to meself, 'You can die now, Fluther, for you've seen th' shadow-dhreams of th' past leppin' to life in th' bodies of livin' men that show, if we were without a titther o' courage for centuries, we're vice versa now!' Looka here. (He stretches out his arm under Peter's face and rolls up his sleeve.) The blood was BOILIN' in me veins!

(The Plough, II, p. 163)

Peter is about to contribute a lengthy description of his own emotionalism ("I was burnin' to dhraw me sword, an' wave an' wave it over me --" [11]) when the Orator's voice is heard once more; Fluther, gulping down the remainder of his beer, rushes out, exclaiming, as if he was attending a dramatic performance, "Come on, man; this is too good to be missed!"

In the first extract, the Voice sought to familiarize

the audience with the picture of Irishmen in arms. The religious imagery of bloodshed as a baptism of salvation is intensified in the second extract. The speaker is, in W.A. Armstrong's words, "more dogmatic, aphoristic, and oracular". [12] Religious allusions are contained in the free metaphoric mixing of wine and blood (as in the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation), in the reference to sacrifice and redemption through sacrifice (which is the center of both the Mass and of Christ's crucifixion):

> Comrade soldiers of the Irish Volunteers and of the Citizen Army, we rejoice in this terrible war. The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields [13] .... Such august homage was never offered to God as this: the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country. And we must be ready to pour out the same red wine in the same glorious sacrifice, for without shedding of blood there is no redemption!
> (The Plough, II, p. 164)

Rosie, however, has other ideas of redemption as she pursues the Covey, whose reactions to her are those of a man who is made frightened and uneasy by the natural urgings of life. Rosie's ploy to win attention is to allude to "th' thoughts that are thremblin' in his mind" but the only thoughts trembling in the Covey's mind are not of her but rather of the current patriotic fervor that is, in his opinion, misdirecting its ambition in its focusing on political freedom when it should strive for economic freedom,

"conthrol o' th' means of production, rates of exchange, an' th' means of disthribution," as he phrases it. Rosie, in an attempt to ingratiate herself, echoes the Covey's words and, inadvertently or not, voices the attitude of the women in the play towards war. "They're not goin' to get Rosie Redmond," says I, "To fight for freedom that wouldn't be worth winnin' in a raffle!" But her true preoccupation is with the animal pleasures; displaying a good deal of her white breasts, she enticingly purrs that "it's heartbreakin' to see a young fella thinkin' of anything, or admirin' anything, but the silk thransparent stockin's showin' off the shape of a little lassie's legs!" (The Plough, II, p. 165) The scene becomes a comic pursuit, similar to that in Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis", of the frightened, completely unwilling Covey by an inviting and half-mocking Rosie. Desperate for a different type of freedom, the Covey breaks from her and runs, leaving the enraged Rosie to denounce him in the religious terms with which she had lampooned those marchers who were oblivious to her charms in the beginning of Act II, "Jasus, it's in a monasthery some of us ought to be, spendin' our holidays kneelin' on our adorers, tellin' our beads, an' knockin' hell out of our buzzums" (The Plough, II, p. 166).

In her response to life, Rosie denounces the patriotic

fervor that grips men and seduces them from the normal (and natural) concerns of life. Fluther and Mrs. Gogan also denounce the pervading obsession with freedom and with all things Irish as arising from vanity and love of show, not from firmly-rooted, high-minded ideals. Again, as in the previous act, the absurdity of the uniforms is dwelt upon. The Covey remarks to Bessie, "When I think of all th' problems in front o' the workers, it makes me sick to be lookin' at oul' codgers goin' about dhressed up like green-accoutred figures gone asthray out of a toyshop!" (The Plough, II, p. 169) and Fluther sneers, "Ah, sure, when you'd look at him, you'd wondher whether th' man was makin' fun o' th' costume, or th' costume was makin' fun o' the man!" 14 Mrs. Gogan, while admiring Peter's regalia, notes with great vividness and color that she can envisage all the uniformed Foresters hanging at a rope's end, "gaspin' an' gaspin' for breath while yous are thryin' to die for Ireland!" Fluther caustically qualifies her statement, "If any o' them is hangin' at the end of a rope, it won't be for Ireland!" (The Plough, II, p. 167), but in payment for their sins of vanity and stupidity.

These thoughts evoke further criticism of another obsession the Irish have — that of honoring their heroes after they are dead rather than when they are alive. By

not actively supporting their heroes while they were trying to achieve their goals, the Irish people themselves hastened the death of these nobly inspired men. Peter has tried to establish his pro-Irish vigilence by claiming that he has gone on a pilgrimage to Wolfe Tone's grave at Bodenstown every year for twenty-five years, plucking a leaf there and placing it in his prayerbook, which is now almost full of leaves. Fluther scorns these rituals for their futility:

> Then Fluther has a vice versa opinion of them that put ivy leaves into their prayer-books, scabbin' it on th' clergy, an' thryin' to out-do th' haloes o' th' saints be lookin' as if he was wearin' around his head a glittherin' aroree boree allis! (Fiercely) Sure, I don't care a damn if you slep' in Bodenstown! You can take your breakfast, dinner, an' tea on th' grave in Bodenstown, if you like, for Fluther!
>
> (The Plough, II, p. 167)

Throughout the play, in words, actions, and sentiments, there is a contrast between the real and the ideal. In all cases, it is the women who have the surest grip on the reality of the situation, while the men, dissatisfied with the quiet heroism daily living requires, bring ruin upon themselves and those close to them in their search for dramatic glory. This is well illustrated by the divergence between the conceptions of war held by Bessie Burgess and the orator. The two excerpts cited below are spoken within minutes of one another.

Bessie. There's a storm of anger tossin' in me heart, thinkin' of all th' poor Tommies, an' with them me own son, dhrenched in water an' soaked in blood, gropin' their way to a shattherin' death, in a shower o' shells! Young men with th' sunny lust o' life beamin' in them, layin' down their white bodies, shredded into torn an' bloody pieces, on th' althar that God Himself has built for th' sacrifice of heroes!

(The Plough, II, p. 168)

Voice of Speaker. The last sixteen months have been the most glorious in the history of Europe. Heroism has come back to the earth. War is a terrible thing, but war is not an evil thing. People in Ireland dread war because they do not know it. Ireland has not known the exhilaration of war for over a hundred years. When war comes to Ireland she must welcome it as she would welcome the Angel of God!

(The Plough, II, p. 169)

The speaker's passionate words paint an unrealistic picture of war that men have, or must have, if they are to risk their lives in battle. The women, however, speak of the full impact of war without delusion. Their words are of hanging, jerking and torn bodies, death, destruction of lives and of homes. Further dramatic irony arises from the first results of the speaker's call to battle. Instead of a heroic assembly marching together to fight the enemy, the audience is regaled with the comical skirmishes between Bessie and Mrs. Gogan. Yet the strife between the two women, farcical though it may be, also contains more serious overtones. The background to the women's fight is the war in Ireland, both of which have been whipped up with words.

The women's strife parallels the men's in its futility, irrationality, and unnecessariness. Indeed, the only difference between the two is that the war that men wage has a greater, more destructive range and is not confined or localized as is the women's.

Act II is comprised of many diverse elements that knit thematically into an ironic commentary on the futility of war. The juxtaposition of the appeal to heroics and the resulting comic, unheroic preoccupations of the tenement dwellers gives Act II much of its power and social commentary. Nowhere in the act is this dramatic device more effectively utilized than in the last scene in which Clitheroe, Brennan, and Langon appear together and confirm their resolve to fight. The three men, in distinct contrast to the riotous individuality of the pub patrons, enter as a distinct group, speaking together in antiphonal sentences, and moving rigidly with stylized gestures. The following excerpt from the play illustrates their complete unanimity of ideals and goals:

> (Clitheroe, Captain Brennan, and Lieut. Langon.... are in a state of emotional excitement. Their faces are flushed and their eyes sparkle; they speak rapidly, as if unaware of the meaning of what they said. They have been mesmerized by the fervency of the speeches ....
>
> Capt. Brennan. We won't have long to wait now.
> Lieut. Langon. Th' time is rotten ripe for revolution.
> Clitheroe. You have a mother, Langon.

Lieut. Langon. Ireland is greater than a mother.
Capt. Brennan. You have a wife, Clitheroe.
Clitheroe. Ireland is greather than a wife.
Lieut. Langon. Th' time for Ireland's battle is now — th' place for Ireland's battle is here.

(The tall, dark figure again is silhouetted against the window. The three men pause and listen.

Voice of the Man. Our foes are strong, but strong as they are, they cannot undo the miracles of God, who ripens in the heart of young men the seeds sown by the young men of a former generation. They think they have pacified Ireland; think they have foreseen everything; think they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools! — they have left us our Fenian dead, and, while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland, unfree, shall never be at peace!

Captain Brennan (catching up The Plough and the Stars). Imprisonment for th' Independence of Ireland!
Lieut. Langon (catching up the Tri-colour). Wounds for th' Independence of Ireland!
Clitheroe. Death for th' Independence of Ireland!
The Three (together). So help us God!

(The Plough, II, pp. 177-178)

The trance-like condition the three men are immersed in betrays several levels of irony. The unfolding developments of the play reveal that Ireland is no greater than the mothers and wives so readily abandoned in the fever of the moment. Secondly, the war situation has inspired rhetoric but not dedication; the soldiers fight, by Act III, not for the cause but for survival, refusing also to deny the validity of their battle because of their fear of being accused of cowardice. As Nora remarks, "They're afraid to say that they're afraid." The moral inadequacy

and the vanity of those swept away by patriotic emotion is fully exposed by the series of betrayals and incidents of vanity that undermine the most fundamental human relationships. In the first act, Mrs. Gogan leaves her consumptive daughter Mollser, who is afraid of dying alone, to attend a political meeting; in the second act, her pugnacity causes her to temporarily abandon her baby in the pub; in the third act, she leaves both Mollser and the baby to loot the shops. Clitheroe abandons his wife in favor of the soldier's life after he learns of his promotion; later he roughly casts her away from him and rejoins his comrades even though he fervently wishes he had never left her side. It is his vanity that led him to desert his wife so willingly and it is his vanity that keeps him from returning to his wife during the nightmare of bloodshed he has become a part of. As W.A. Armstrong has pointed out, further irony is present in the three men's unwittingly prophetic chorus of the imprisonment, wounds, and death each man is willing to suffer for the freedom of Ireland. By the end of the play, Brennan will be imprisoned, Langon will be wounded, and Clitheroe will bring death to himself, to Nora (a symbol, in her insanity, of the insanity of war), and to their unborn child.

Throughout the act and indeed, throughout the play as

a whole, militarism is at variance with the natural instincts of life. It is parodied, at the close of Act II, by the comic emergence of the drunken, merry, amorous pair, Fluther and Rosie, in the midst of a "panorama of heroic virtue .... The brisk orders of the officer, 'Irish Volunteers, by th' right, quick march!' are literally carried out before the audience's eyes by Rosie and Fluther exiting for an evening of 'cuddlin' an' kissin'' in Rosie's bed." 15

In Acts I and II of The Plough and the Stars, the men were dreamily immersed in visions of smart, colorful regalia and painless combat. In Act III, the Irish Volunteers encounter for the first time the grim realities of war -- the wounds, brutality, fear, death, and, instead of flashing swords on horseback, they dodge bullets and cannon fire. The horror is even more pronounced because of the Irishmen's complete inability to foresee the dangers and tribulations ahead. The childlike notions of what a struggle against England would be like is dramatically presented in The Plough and the Stars by the contrast between what the men envisioned in Acts I and II and what they endure in Acts III and IV. This same dichotomy is present in O'Casey's autobiographical accounts of his time of membership in the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Obviously

more attuned to the realities of the situation, O'Casey continually strove to prepare his fellow Irishmen for, not a parade battle gleaned from an outdated British Manual of Military Drill that demonstrated how to shield a head from a sabre-cut and how to fight on horseback, but for a guerilla war in which shadowy combatants would harass, frustrate, and demoralize the enemy. The following passage makes evident the impracticality with which, unlike O'Casey, the I.R.B. approached the impending struggle for independence:

> At Centre meetings he tried to put before them some of the problems they would have to face: digging sudden shelters; a slow come-together, a quick get-away, or the opposite; the use of signalling; the problem of provisions; and the care of the wounded .... Few of those whom Sean knew could handle a pick or shovel, tie a knot, do a bandage round a serious wound, slash a gut-way in a hedge, light a fire and cook a simple meal in a wet field with a keen wind blowing. About these things they knew next to nothing .... [16]

> They didn't seem to know even what they would have to face. Any shelter they might need, they would have to build it with their own hands, hands that wouldn't know how to do it. A shelter, strong, but to last through the time of danger only. Any permanent sit-down in any place wouldn't do; it would be surrounded, and dissipated in smoke and flame. Their vantage points would have to be the deep ditch, the bramble hedge tangled with the dog-rose, or the street corner leading from a maze of turnings. They couldn't hope to stand upright in battle: they would have to come crouching, and, crouching, get away again swift and foxy. And there would be no green flag for a wounded man to wrap around him; he would be lucky to have a bandage to stay the flow from his leaking body. [17]

The reports of battle given by Mrs. Gogan and the Covey concentrate of the terrible reality of war; no longer is there any mention of glory or of parade regalia. Mrs. Gogan reports that "th' Tommies is sthretched in heaps around Nelson's Pillar an' th' Parnell Statue, an' that th' pavin' sets in O'Connell Street is nearly covered be pools o' blood" (The Plough, III, p. 181). The Covey describes the Lancers,

> "Throttin' along, heads in th' air; spurs an' sabres jinglin', an' lances quiverin', an' lookin' as if they were assin' themselves, 'Where's these blighters, till we get a prod at them?' when there was a volley from th' Post Office that stretched half o' them, an' sent th' rest gallopin' away wondherin' how far they'd have to go before they'd feel safe."
>
> (The Plough, III, p. 182)

After Peter tells that the gunboat Helga is shelling Liberty Hall forcing the people living on the quays to "crawl on their bellies to Mass with th' bullets that were flyin' around", Bessie Burgess echoes O'Casey's sentiments as she comments chorically:

> Maybe yous are satisfied now; maybe yous are satisfied now. Go on an' get guns if yous are men -- Johnny get your gun, get your gun, get your gun! Yous are all nicely shanghaied now; th' boyo hasn't a sword on his thigh now! Oh, yous are all nicely shanghaied now!
>
> (The Plough, III, pp. 182-183)

From her dramatically effective God's-eye view from the top of the tenement house, Bessie continues to hurl reproaches

at the tragedy-stricken people below. Her railing is a protest against the illusions that have been deliberately propagated in order that men would be inspired to take up arms and participate in a violent struggle.

> Yous are all nicely shanghaied now! Sorra mend th' lasses that have been kissin' an' cuddlin' their boys into th' sheddin' of blood! ... Fillin' their minds with fairy tales that had no beginnin', but, please God, 'll have a bloody quick endin'! ... Turnin' bitther into sweet, an' sweet into bitther.
> (The Plough, III, p. 184)

Nora, for all her idyllic visions, has always been aware of the dangers of war, unlike her husband who is a frustrated dreamer and romanticizer. The necessities and circumstances of life have made Nora a realist; her poverty checks any idealization of Ireland as Kathleen ni Houlihan; her powerful fear and awareness of loss forestalls any celebration of the ritual of bloodshed by which men attempt to level their differences. But, as Nora in her frenzied search for Jack at the barricades comes to realize, war in its terrifying vastness and malevolent effects that are visible everywhere, destroys the illusions that men have held about strife and reveals "somber pride,... ruthless power,... craven terror ... an immense and hopeless despair." [18] Exhausted and hysterical, Nora unflinchingly denounces the horror of the war situation:

Nora (wearily). I could find him nowhere, Mrs. Gogan. None o' them would tell me where he was. They told me I shamed my husband an' th' women of Ireland be carryin' on as I was .... They said th' women must learn to be brave an' cease to be cowardly.... Me who risked more for love than they would risk for hate .... (Raising her voice in hysterical protest) My Jack will be killed, my Jack will be killed! .... He is to be butchered as a sacrifice to th' dead! ....

Mrs. Gogan (to Nora). He'll come home safe enough to you, you'll find, Mrs. Clitheroe; afther all, there's a power o' women that's handed over sons an' husbands to take a runnin' risk in th' fight they're wagin'.

Nora. I can't help thinkin' every shot fired 'll be fired at Jack, an' every shot fired at Jack'll be fired at me. What do I care for th' others? I can think only of me own self .... An' there's no woman gives a son or a husband to be killed — if they say it, they're lyin', lyin', against God, Nature, an' against themselves!.... One blasted hussy at a barricade told me to go home an' not be thryin' to dishearten th' men .... That I wasn't worthy to bear a son to a man that was out fightin' for freedom.... I clawed at her, an' smashed her in th' face till we were separated .... I was pushed down th' street, an' I cursed them -- cursed the rebel ruffians an' Volunteers that had dhragged me ravin' mad into th' streets to seek me husband!

Peter. You'll have to have patience, Nora. We all have to put up with twarthers an' tormentors in this world.

The Covey. If they were fightin' for anything worth while, I wouldn't mind.

Fluther (to Nora). Nothin' derogatory'll happen to Mr. Clitheroe. You'll find, now, in th' finish up it'll be vice versa.

Nora. Oh, I know that wherever he is, he's thinkin' of wantin' to be with me. I know he's longin' to be passin' his hand through me hair, to be caressin' me neck, to fondle me hand an' to feel me kisses clingin' to his mouth .... An' he stands wherever he is because he's brave? (Vehemently) No, but because he's a coward, a coward, a coward!

Mrs. Gogan. Oh, they're not cowards anyway.

Nora (with denunciatory anger). I tell you they're afraid to say they're afraid! ... Oh, I saw it, I saw it, Mrs. Gogan ... At th' barricade in North King Street

> I saw fear glowin' in all their eyes .... An' in th' middle o' th' sthreet was somethin' huddled up in a horrible tangled heap .... His face was jammed again th' stones, an' his arm was twisted round his back .... An' every twist of his body was a cry against th' terrible thing that had happened to him .... An' I saw they were afraid to look at it .... An' some o' them laughed at me, but the laugh was a frightened one .... An' some o' them shouted at me, but th' shout had in it th' shiver o' fear .... I tell you they were afraid, afraid, afraid!
>
> Mrs. Gogan (leading her towards the house). Come on in, dear. If you'd been a little longer together, th' wrench asunder wouldn't have been so sharp.
>
> (The Plough, III, pp. 184-185)

Amidst the uncomprehending stupidity of Mrs. Gogan, the pitying self-centeredness of Peter, the theoretical and economic preoccupations of the Covey, and the bland assurances of Fluther, Nora expresses her awareness of not only the horror of war, but also of the false pride and false courage that persuade unwilling men to deny both their fears of war and their impulse towards life. Her words are convincingly verified later in the act with the appearance of the three soldiers, Brennan, Langon, and Clitheroe. Langon has sustained a severe wound and is convulsed with agony. Clitheroe is "pale, and in a state of calm nervousness". Nora rushes from the tenement with great joy and relief and Clitheroe, holding her in his arms, admits brokenly, "My Nora; my little, beautiful Nora, I wish to God I'd never left you" (The Plough, III, p. 194). Bessie rather callously echoes this fervent statement and

elaborates on the cause of his sentiment:

> The Minsthrel Boys aren't feelin' very comfortable now. Th' big guns has knocked all th' harps out of their hands. General Clitheroe'd rather be unlacin' his wife's bodice than standin' at a barricade.... An' the professor of chicken-butcherin' there, finds he's up against somethin' a little tougher even than his own chickens, an' that's sayin' a lot! (The Plough, III, p. 194)

But although the war experience has destroyed the men's illusions, they are not better men for it since the motivation for all their action is the desire to maintain the camouflage of courage and dedication that obscures their horror and cowardice. The desire to keep up appearances is evident in Clitheroe's second remark to Nora, a response to her wild joy and eagerness to kiss, "Now, for God's sake, Nora, don't make a scene" (The Plough, III, p. 194). Upon hearing that Nora had spent the previous night at the barricades searching for him and screaming his name, Clitheroe's reaction is not one of concern for the danger she was in but rather one of anger, fearing that her action would bring him future shame. "They'll say now that I sent you out th' way I'd have an excuse to bring you home .... Are you goin' to turn all th' risks I'm takin' into a laugh?" (The Plough, III, p. 196) Not even the terrible reality of war, evidently, can destroy Clitheroe's vanity; he heeds Brennan's taunting exhortations to continue in the war, not realizing that Nora is,

as she asserts, his dearest and truest comrade. His mingled pride, fear, and guilt make him deaf to Nora's observations that Brennan and Langon want the comfort of having him face the same danger as they do. Clinging to her husband and indicating Brennan, Nora tries in vain to show Jack the cowardice common to all the fighters:

> Look, Jack, look at th' anger in his face; look at th' fear glintin' in his eyes .... He himself's afraid, afraid, afraid! ... He wants you to go th' way he'll have th' chance of death strikin' you an' missin' him!... Turn around an' look at him, Jack, look at him, look at him!... His very soul is cold ... shiverin' with th' thought of what may happen to him .... It is his fear that is thryin' to frighten you from recognizin' th' same fear that is in your own heart!
>
> (The Plough, III, p. 197)

Her appeal, her honesty are in vain; mocked by Brennan's inquiry as to whether he is going to arrange for another honeymoon, Clitheroe roughly breaks Nora's hold and leaves her lying on the street, poignantly though melodramatically pleading that he stay with her.

It is evident from the dramatic action that the women suffer most in the war. As a class, moreover, the slum dwellers experience war much more intensely than any other. This is illustrated just prior to the looting, when, as Fluther and the Covey are preparing to go off to raid luxuries that life has consistently denied them, a stout, middle-aged woman, obviously out of place with her

fashionable clothes and English accent, begs the men to show her a safe way home. In her own words, she was "foolish enough to visit a friend, thinking the howl thing was a joke, and now I cawn't get a car or a tram to take me home -- isn't it awful?" (The Plough, III, p. 189) Now she is fainting with fear and inconvenienced by the lack of transportation home, an inconvenience which, in comparison to the agonies which the tenement dwellers suffer, is a trifle. Because of the war, Nora loses her husband, her baby, and her sanity while Bessie dies unheroically despite all her charitable acts.

In The Plough and the Stars the threat of impending tragedy inspires Bessie Burgess, Nora Clitheroe, and Jinnie Gogan to rouse themselves in a unified counter-struggle against the social disasters of war and poverty. It is among the slum dwellers rather than the soldiers that true heroism emerges. Jinnie Gogan, Bessie Burgess, Rosie Redmond, Fluther Good, Peter Flynn, the Covey, and Nora Clitheroe may torment each other in the first part of the play but manage to exhibit their inherent nobility in their sacrifices for each other. Fluther, a man of instinctual nature and with a weakness for whiskey, risks his life to search out Nora who is at the front line calling for Jack, and later braves the menace of death to arrange for the

burial of Mollser and Nora's stillborn baby. Similarly, Bessie Burgess, violent, contemptuous, and abrasive devotes herself unselfishly to Nora and dies trying to protect her from a sniper's bullet. The significance of such displays of heroism and of an awareness of community are intensified by the immediacy of the war situation since a display of these qualities in times of danger is contrary to the instincts of self-preservation. The moral superiority of the three, Nora, Bessie, and Fluther, is evident in their spontaneous charity and endurance, the latter a quality David Krause names as the only untainted heroism in the play.

Yet despite the Dubliners' capacity for self-denying heroism, they also reveal a zest for the anti-heroic. The outbreak of war signals the unleashing of anarchy, as comically evidenced in the extravagent excesses of looting which, taking place amidst the desperation of combat and the ever present possibility of death, mocks the myth of war as heroic endeavour as did the brawls in the pub and the amorousness of Fluther and Rosie amidst the rising patriotic fervor of the parading assembly in Act II. Peter, self-pitying because he does not have the personal courage needed to join the looters as he would like to, shouts, "Oh, God forgive th' people that,

instead o' burnishin' th' work th' boys is doin' today with quiet honesty an' patience, is revilin' their sacrifices with a riot of lootin' an' roguery!" (The Plough, III, p. 192) The slum dwellers' looting, or as Peter calls it, "mad endeyvours to plundher an' desthroy", provides for them the one opportunity in the play for joyous enthusiasm and also for obtaining the material needs that their social circumstances have constantly denied them. Comic relief is provided momentarily by the aftermath of Fluther's pub-raiding:

> Down the street is heard a wild, drunken yell; it comes nearer, and Fluther enters, frenzied, wide-eyed, mad, roaring drunk. In his arms is an earthen half-gallon jar of whisky; streaming from one of the pockets of his coat is the arm of a new tunic shirt; on his head is a woman's vivid blue hat with gold lacing, all of which he has looted.
> (The Plough, III, p. 198)

Providing a more serious context for the looting but not the less enthusiastic for the danger, Bessie "rapidly and breathlessly" reports the desperate chaos of the common people and of the soldiers attempting to restore order among the population:

> They're breakin' into th' shops, they're breakin' into th' shops! Smashin' th' windows, battherin' in th' doors, an' whippin' away everything! An' th' Volunteers is firin' on them. I seen two men an' a lassie pushin' a piano down th' sthreet, an' th' sweat rollin' off them thryin' to get it up on th' pavement; an' an' oul' wan that must ha' been seventy lookin' as if she'd dhrop every minute with th' dint o' heart beatin', thryin' to pull a big

> double bed out of a broken shop-window! I was goin' to wait till I dhressed meself from th' skin out.
>
> (The Plough, III, pp. 187-188)

Bessie's participation in the looting is, of course, not socially responsible but we are swiftly presented with an example of her kindness and her inherent unselfishness that instantly refutes and renders absurd the Covey's self-centered attack on Bessie: "Th' selfishness of that one -- she waited till she got all she could carry before she'd come to tell anyone!" After Bessie's excited news of the widespread looting, Mollser asks Bessie, as the latter is carrying her pillage into the house, to help her in as she is "feelin' curious". Bessie immediately leaves her treasures and rapidly returns to help Mollser in, an act of charity and concern that evokes memories of Bessie silently and unseen by the other characters giving the consumptive girl a mug of milk. Bessie's humanity is more pronounced than that of Captain Brennan, for example, whom the war has made into a savagely frightened mechanical soldier with no awareness of his brotherhood with the lower classes.

> Capt. Brennan (savagely to Clitheroe). Why did you fire over their heads? Why didn't you fire to kill?
>
> Clitheroe. No, no, Bill; bad as they are they're Irish men and women.
>
> Capt. Brennan (savagely). Irish be damned! Attackin' an' mobbin' th' men that are riskin' their lives for them. If these slum lice gather at our

> at our heels again, plug one o' them, or I'll soon shock them with a shot or two meself!
> (The Plough, III, pp. 193-194)

The helplessness of these "slum lice" to avert the holocaust that threatens to annihilate them is visually presented in the setting of the fourth act, a small attic room, the ceiling of which, with its sloping angle, accentuates the apartment's look of compressed confinement. Both the poor and Ireland herself have been impoverished, beaten back, and cornered by the war and the English. Bessie's attic room contains all aspects of Ireland. The scars of war are evident in the bullet-starred pane of glass, in the oak coffin balanced on two kitchen chairs, in the glare of burning buildings in the town, and in the lack of electricity, the only light coming from the fire in the grate and two candles. Tattered lace curtains, reminders of more gracious times, drape the window while the looted brass standard-lamp with a fancy shade and the vividly crimson silk dress present a sharp contrast to the soiled poverty bordering on destitution.

The sense of confinement is further emphasized by Fluther's cautious peering out the window and commenting upon the devastation that he has a bird's-eye-view of:

> Fluther (furtively peeping out of the window).... Th' sky's gettin' reddher an' reddher.... You'd think it was afire .... Half o' th' city must be burnin'.

The Covey. If I was you, Fluther, I'd keep away from that window.... It's dangerous, an', besides, if they see you, you'll only bring a nose on th' house.

Peter. Yes; an' he knows we had to leave our own place th' way they were riddlin' it with machine-gun fire.... He'll keep on pimpin' an' pimpin' there, till we have to fly out o' this place too.

Fluther (ironically). If they make any attack here, we'll send you out in your green an' glory uniform, shakin' your sword over your head, an' they'll fly before you as th' Danes flew before Brian Boru!

(The Plough, IV, p. 201)

Fluther's sneer at Peter mocks the vanquished and vaporous illusions of grandeur that the parading men held in Act II. The realization of their previous folly and vanity comes with the startling reality of the brutality of war. Captain Brennan acknowledges the wisdom of guerilla warfare's practicality in camouflaging its combatants in his reply to the Covey's suggesting that he slip back to where he came from.

> There's no chance o' slippin' back now, for th' military are everywhere: a fly couldn't get through. I'd never have got here, only I managed to change me uniform for what I'm wearin'.... I'll have to take me chance, an' thry to lie low here for a while.
>
> (The Plough, IV, p. 207)

The earnestness of war is further reinforced by the Corporal's passionately vengeful outburst, "Christ, that's another of our men 'it by that blawsted sniper! 'E's knocking abaht 'ere, somewheres. Gawd, when we get th'

bloighter, we'll give 'im the cold steel, we will. We'll jab the belly aht of 'im, we will" (The Plough, IV, p. 209) and by his callously matter-of-fact reply to Fluther's observation:

> Fluther (after an embarrassing pause). Th' air in th' sthreet outside's shakin' with the firin' o' rifles an' machine-guns. It must be a hot shop in th' middle o' th' scrap.
> Corporal Stoddart. We're pumping lead in on 'em from every side, now; they'll soon be shoving up th' white flag.
> (The Plough, IV, p. 211)

That war is not a game is also realized. Previously, when learning that the British were using artillery on the Irish, Fluther plaintively remarked, "Aw, holy Christ, that's not playin' th' game" (The Plough, III, p. 187). His words are echoed near the end of the play, this time by a British sergeant. Fluther's reply illustrates the practical knowledge he has gained through his experiences during the war:

> Sergeant Tinley. Private Taylor; got 'it roight through the chest, 'e did; an 'ole in front of 'im as 'ow you could put your fist through, and 'arf 'is back blown awoy! Dum-dum bullets they're using. Gang of Hassassins potting at us from behind roofs. That's not playing the goime: why down't they come into the owpen and foight fair!
> Fluther (unable to stand the slight). Fight fair! A few hundhred scrawls o' chaps with a couple o' guns an' Rosary beads, again' a hundhred thousand thrained men with horse, fut, an' artillery ... an' he wants us

to fight fair!.... D'ye want us to come out in our skins an' throw stones?
(The Plough, IV, p. 213)

It is interesting to observe that the two scenes referred to above have another parallel; in both, Fluther, Peter, and the Covey are fixedly pursuing the pleasures of a game and their exuberance and thorniness are not, particularly in the first episode, diminished. There are three common elements in both that form a type of pattern -- the game, the interruption by war, the baiting of Peter, and the resumption of the game.

The Covey (who has taken from his pocket two worn coins and a thin strip of wood about four inches long). What's th' bettin'?
Peter. Heads, a juice.
Fluther. Harps, a tanner.
(The Covey places the coins on the strip of wood, and flips them up into the air. As they jingle on the ground the distant boom of a big gun is heard. They stand for a moment listening.
Fluther. What th' hell's that?
The Covey. It's like th' boom of a big gun!
Fluther. Surely to God they're not goin' to use artillery on us?
The Covey (scornfully). Not goin'! (Vehemently) Wouldn't they use anything on us, man?
Fluther. Aw, holy Christ, that's not playin' the game!
Peter (plaintively). What would happen if a shell landed here now?
The Covey (ironically). You'd be off to heaven in a fiery chariot.
Peter. In spite of all th' warnin's that's ringin' around us, are you goin' to start your pickin' at me again?
Fluther. Go on, toss them again, toss them again .... Harps, a tanner.
Peter. Heads, a juice. (The Covey tosses the coins.)
Fluther (as the coins fall). Let them roll, let them roll. Heads, be God!
(The Plough, III, p. 187)

The game of chance played in spite of the approaching menace and the abandonment of this idle gambling for the more lucrative gamble of looting reflect the lack of restraint and order in a society beseiged by war. In Act IV, Peter, the Covey, and Fluther play cards beside the coffin of Mollser and Nora's baby in Bessie's flat. Throughout the game, they speak of Nora's condition, the social evils that prevented Mollser from receiving proper care, [20] and the heroism of Bessie who tended Nora through childbirth and insanity for three days and nights. This commentary on personal and social ills is abruptly interrupted by a renewal of petty squabbling. The Covey has just commented on Bessie's self-sacrifice, acknowledging her endurance and indispensability. Fluther replies:

Fluther. I always knew there was never anything really derogatory with poor oul' Bessie. (To Peter, who is taking a trick) Ay, houl' on, there, don't be so damn quick -- that's my thrick.
Peter. What's your thrick? It's my thrick, man.
Fluther (loudly). How is it your thrick?
Peter (answering as loudly). Didn't I lead th' deuce!
Fluther. You must be gettin' blind, man; don't you see th' ace?
Bessie (appearing at the door of room, Left; in a tense whisper). D'ye want to waken her again on me, when she's just gone asleep? If she wakes will yous come an' mind her? If I hear a whisper out o' one o' yous again, I'll... gut yous!
The Covey (in a whisper). S-s-s-h. She can hear anything above a whisper.
Peter (looking up at the ceiling). Th' gentle an' merciful God'll give th' pair o' yous a

scawldin' an' a scarifyin' one o' these days!
(Fluther takes a bottle of whisky from his pocket, and takes a drink.

The Covey (to Fluther). Why don't you spread that out, man, an' thry to keep a sup for to-morrow?

Fluther. Spread it out? Keep a sup for to-morrow? How th' hell does a fella know there'll be any to-morrow? If I'm goin' to be whipped away, let me be whipped away when it's empty, an' not when it's half full!

(The Plough, IV, pp. 202-203)

This scene presents a duality of viewpoints. The card game is both "a tragic image of the gamble of war and its waste of human potentialities" [21] and also a ritual which does evoke a semblance of order, sporadic though it may be, in the midst of chaos. The scene is important too because it reveals a significant repression of the exuberant personalities and combats of Fluther, Peter, and the Covey. True, these are never completely subdued but muted they are by the overwhelming impact of the war, the widespread destruction in the city, Nora's tragedy, Bessie's earnest threats, and by the armed occupation of Bessie's attic rooms by the Tommies. The former irresponsibility and recklessness, though not totally absent, is diminished by the experience of collective tragedy. Indeed, the war draws the tenement poor together. Religious differences vanish as inconsequential as the three bickering women, Nora, Bessie, and Mrs. Gogan, become reconciled in their mutual need. Bessie grows in heroic stature and becomes

the pillar of strength, voicing the philosophy of survival that the poor, the downtrodden, and the beseiged must cling to: "We'll have to be brave, an' let patience clip away th' heaviness of th' slow-movin' hours, remamberin' that sorrow may endure for th' night, but joy cometh in th' mornin'...." (The Plough, IV, p. 200).

All the patriotic aspirations and slogans of the previous acts are, in the last act of The Plough and the Stars, mocked, denied, and exposed as illusions. Captain Brennan clings desperately to two last illusions — that his behavior was courageous and that Clitheroe's death was justified by the nobility of the cause for which he fought. Bessie and Nora shatter these falsities, the former by her acts of courage, the latter by her insights, accusations, and the suffering and insanity that the war experience has inflicted upon her. Captain Brennan has come for refuge to Bessie's flat, the marks of his harrowing experiences plainly evident on his dusty, mud-stained clothes and his pallid, drawn countenance. He comes, too, to deliver Jack's last message to Nora, maintaining, perhaps for the preservation of his own sanity, that "Mrs. Clitheroe's grief will be a joy when she realizes that she has had a hero for a husband." Bessie dryly replies, "If you only seen her, you'd know to th' differ" (The

Plough, IV, p. 204). Nora's degeneration belies Brennan's romantic version of her husband's last moments:

> He took it like a man. His last whisper was to 'Tell Nora to be brave; that I'm ready to meet my God, an' that I'm proud to die for Ireland.' An' when our General heard it he said that 'Commandant Clitheroe's end was a gleam of glory.'
> (The Plough, IV, p. 204)

Nora appears, suffering and unable to reconcile herself to the fact that the war has, in her words, "dhriven away th' little happiness life had to spare for me" (The Plough, III, p. 186). She is dishevelled in appearance, pale, nervous, vacant in thought, dwelling in memory and succumbing to insanity. Deprived of her husband and baby, she screams out against the brutality of war: "Murderers, that's what yous are; murderers, murderers!"

Brennan's bravery is also called into question. He recounts that he was not able to do anything for Jack as he watched the blood trickling from his comrade's mouth. The tone of Brennan's account becomes defensive as he feels obliged to justify his abandonment of Clitheroe by demonstrating the danger he endured:

> ... I said a prayer for th' dyin', an' twined his Rosary beads around his fingers .... Then I had to leave him to save meself.... (He shows some holes in his coat) Look at th' way a machine-gun tore at me coat, as I belted out o' the buildin' an' darted across th' sthreet for shelter.... An' then, I seen The Plough an' th' Stars fallin' like a shot as th' roof crashed in, an' where I'd left poor Jack was nothin' but a leppin' spout o' flame!
> (The Plough, IV, p. 204)

Bessie passes her judgment upon him as she vehemently replies, "Ay, you left him! You twined his Rosary beads round his fingers, an' then you run like a hare to get out o' danger!" She has won her right to denounce him for her heroism has consisted of a moving display of endurance, unselfishness, and maternal dedication. [22] Indeed, those not actively fighting in the war display the greatest courage. Love for her husband drove Nora out into the front-line of battle, defying death, patriotism, public opinion, and Jack's vanity in order to bring him home. Fluther, a creature of noble impulses, rescues Nora from the barricades and risks death again (as he had ignominiously done previously during his looting spree) to make arrangements for the funeral of Mollser and Nora's baby. Both Nora and Mrs. Gogan pay tribute to Fluther. Nora acknowledges her indebtedness to him when she says, "I don't know what I'd have done, only for Fluther. I'd have been lyin' in th' streets, only for him" (The Plough, III, p. 186). Mrs. Gogan tells him:

> I'll never forget what you done for me, Fluther, goin' around at th' risk of your life settlin' everything with th' undhertaker an' th' cemetery people. When all me own were afraid to put their noses out, you plunged like a good one through hummin' bullets, an' they knockin' fire out o' th' road, tinklin' through th' frightened windows, an' splashin' themselves to pieces on th' walls!
> (The Plough, IV, p. 209)

The play closes with an occupation scene; the English have taken over Bessie's flat, just as they have overrun Ireland. With their entry, violence assumes a physical embodiment powerful enough to subdue Fluther, Peter, and the Covey as they hurriedly resume their card game, trying to keep their hands from trembling. Their meekness is momentary, however, for it is not long before the Covey's socialism, Fluther's aggressiveness, and Peter's indignant anger burst forth. The actual battle also attains greater proximity than it had previously for interspersed through this scene are the sounds of a sniper's rifle followed immediately by a scream of pain and the expressionistic chant, "Red Cro...ss, Red Cro...ss! Ambu...lance, Ambu... lance!" which, in their suggestion of unreality, punctuate moments of dramatic tension. Nora adds, in her insanity and incomprehension of her surroundings, to the unreality of the war situation. Her activities, those of stoking the fire, putting the kettle on, and preparing the table for tea represent the normal actions of daily life, horribly situated in the midst of an unchristian bloodbath. The verses that Nora sings bring back a gentler time of love and idealism in which she flourished in the past, now seemingly remote and dreamlike in its idyllic simplicity. Her tea-making and her singing are tragically

disrupted by her own insanity and by the insanity of war.

Nora. I imagine th' room looks very odd somehow.... I was nearly forgetting Jack's tea .... Ah, I think I'll have everything done before he gets in.... (She lilts gently, as she arranges the table.)
Th' violets were scenting th' woods, Nora,
Displaying their charms to th' bee,
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,
An' you said you lov'd only me.

Th' chestnut blooms gleam'd through th' glade, Nora,
A robin sand loud from a tree,
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,
An' you said you lov'd only me.

(She pauses suddenly, and glances round the room.
Nora (doubtfully). I can't help feelin' this room very strange.... What is it? ...What is it? ... I must think.... I must thry to remember ....
Voices chanting in a distant street. Ambu...lance, Ambu...lance! Red Cró...ss, Red Cro...ss!
Nora (startled and listening for a moment, then resuming the arrangement of the table):
Trees, birds, an' bees sang a song, Nora,
Of happier transports to be,
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,
An' you said you lov'd only me.

(A burst of rifle fire is heard in a street near by, followed by the rapid rok, tok, tok of a machine-gun.)
(The Plough, IV, p. 214)

This scene duplicates in miniature Nora's activities in Act I of making tea for Jack amid "everlastin' uproar", hearkening back to a romantic past with Jack's love song, and upbraiding Peter with a comment that concerns men in general: "If you attempt to wag that sword of yours at anybody again, it'll have to be taken off you an' put in a safe place away from babies that don't know th' danger o' them things"(The Plough, I, p. 148). In the final scene,

we see the effects of the men's irresponsibility — Nora's insanity and Bessie's death. Noble in death as in life, Bessie has no one to mourn her but Mrs. Gogan; Nora is paralyzed in her fear of death and the British soldiers justify the murder of Bessie as a necessity: "Well, we couldn't afford to toik any chawnces" (The Plough, IV, p. 217). In Shaw's words about the Great War, "ignorant and soulless cunning and energy" has now taken over, with "frightful consequences". [23] Bessie's prophecy at the close of Act I has been fulfilled:

> There's th' men marchin' out into th' dhread dimness o' danger, while th' lice is crawlin' about feedin' on th' fatness o' the land! But yous'll not escape from th' arrow that flieth be night, or th' sickness that wasteth be day.... An' ladyship an' all, as some o' them may be, they'll be scattered abroad, like th' dust in th' darkness!
>
> (The Plough, I, p. 160)

The British soldiers, in a symbolic occupation of Ireland, settle themselves in Bessie's flat, comfortably and complacently drinking the tea Nora has prepared amidst the "bitter burst of rifle and machine-gun fire" and the "boom, boom of artillery" (The Plough, IV, p. 218). Then, in a very strong suggestion of the closing moments of George Bernard Shaw's Heartbreak House, "the glare in the sky seen through the window flares into a fuller and deeper red" (The Plough, IV, p. 218) and the soldiers

sing "Keep the Home Fires Burning":

> (The voices of soldiers at a barricade outside the house are heard singing:
> They were summoned from th 'illside,
> They were called in from the glen,
> And the country found 'em ready
> At the stirring call for men.
> Let not tears add to their 'ardship,
> As the soldiers pass along,
> And although our 'eart is breaking,
> Make it sing this cheery song.
>
> Sergeant Tilney and Corporal Stoddard (joining in the chorus, as they sip the tea):
> Keep the 'owme fires burning,
> While your 'earts are yearning;
> Though your lads are far away
> They dream of 'owme;
> There's a silver loining
> Through the dark cloud shoining,
> Turn the dark cloud inside out,
> Till the boys come 'owme!
> (The Plough, IV, p. 218)

There are layers of irony reflected in this song for the sentiment is greatly at variance with reality. Dublin is burning. Nora's kindling of the hearth-fire for tea brought the warmth, love, and feeling of security with which home is associated; the soldiers' fire brings death, destruction, hatred, pain and bereavement. The song, sung at the close of the play, assumes further irony in that it is a glorification of the patriotic image of war that has been so thoroughly unmasked as vainglorious and insubstantial throughout the entire play. For Nora, who answered "the stirring call for men" with tears and

heartbreak, and for the poor whose lives and meagre possessions were lost, there is no silver lining through the dark cloud shining, since Jack will never return home from the wars, his "heroism" will bring no joy to his wife, and the poor will remain downtrodden and abject, bearing the heaviest burdens of life. Men have always expected good to arise from the evil of war and have always been deeply disappointed because they have failed to learn from their collective and individual histories. In his preface to Heartbreak House, Shaw wrote:

> I have said that men assumed that war had reversed the order of nature, and that all was lost unless we did the exact opposite of everything we had found necessary and beneficial in peace. But the truth was worse than that. The war did not change men's minds in any such impossible way. What really happened was that the impact of physical death and destruction, the one reality that every fool can understand, tore off the masks of education, art, science, and religion from our ignorance and barbarism, and left us glorying grotesquely in the licence suddenly accorded to our vilest passions and most abject terrors. [24]

Shaw went on to add what serves as a direct commentary on the blind callousness of O'Casey's soldiers and on the futility of waging war for lasting peace or for the betterment of man. The comment illustrates the feeling one receives at the close of The Plough and the Stars that through war, much has been destroyed, nothing has been rebuilt or gained. Shaw speaks again:

> We have all had a tremendous jolt; and ... the widespread notion that the shock of the war would automatically make a new heaven and a new earth, and that the dog would never go back to his vomit nor the sow to her wallowing in the mire, is already seen to be a delusion. [25]

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: THE DUBLIN TRILOGY

Sean O'Casey's three Abbey plays, The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, and The Plough and the Stars may be considered as an epic cycle of political and social tragedy. Certain aspects recur throughout the trilogy to create a sense of unity; these include O'Casey's dire and ironic presentation of the destructive forces in society, the mingling of individual and social strife, the terrors of anarchy resulting from civil war, and the consequent suffering of the civilian population.[1] 1915 - 1922, one of the most significant periods in Irish history, is presented, in these three plays, through its impact on the common people who are unwillingly and unwittingly trapped in the savagery of violent social upheaval. With uncompromising candor, O'Casey depicts the sufferings of the tenement dwellers who manage to endure tragedy and deprivation, not with the narcotic of national abstractions or patriotic idealisms, but with the aid of their intelligence, imagination, wit, and group solidarity in the face of all adversity. In choosing to focus on the lower classes, O'Casey was simultaneously attaining two very important goals. Firstly, the dramatist challenged commonly held

patriotic, political, and religious attitudes by having questionable characters express these beliefs at unsuitable moments in the dramatic action. Secondly, O'Casey demonstrated that the lower, unacclaimed orders of society are capable of deeds of courage and sacrifice equally worthy of celebration as are those of legendary heroes.

In Sean O'Casey's earliest plays, as we have seen in particular cases, it is the women who are the true heroes and givers of life, living and dying in reality while the men are lost in the illusions that nationalism, pseudo-heroic gestures, alcoholic fantasies, and the evanescence of a poetry removed from life provide. The tragedy resides, not only in the moral irresponsibility of the males but in the endurance and sufferings that the women undergo. Juno summarizes the role of the woman when, in Act III, upon learning of Mary's pregnancy and of the legacy's insubstantiality, she says, "Who has kep' th' home together for the past few years — only me? An' who'll have to bear th' biggest part o' this trouble but me? — but whinin' an' whingin' isn't goin' to do any good" (Juno, III, p. 64).

By the end of Juno and the Paycock, Juno has become a universal figure, representing both womankind and

Ireland. Cathleen ni Houlihan, not the idealized peasant woman or ethereal young queen of Yeats and Pearse, is instead "coarsely dressed, hair a little tousled ... barefooted, sometimes with a whiff of whiskey off her breath; brave and brawny; at ease in the smell of sweat and the sound of bad language, vital, and asurge with immortality."[2] With these words, O'Casey identified Cathleen ni Houlihan with the ragged tenement women. He also shocked and angered his audience by suggesting that the Irish wars against the British and later amongst themselves could reveal the worst as well as the best in men, that the soldiers were fearful and "cowardly", longing to return to their homes and families, that the cause for which they had given their lives or an arm or a leg was an illusion, that no woman willingly sent out her son or her husband to be killed, that the women at home displayed greater heroism than did the men at the barricades.

This "desecration of Ireland's household gods", to borrow a phrase from David Krause, was necessary for the full maturation of the Irish nation. O'Casey, like Shaw in John Bull's Other Island, attempted to strip away Ireland's romantic conception of herself and replace it with the harsh reality. Of Shaw's play O'Casey wrote:

> Shaw showed an Ireland very different from the lady Yeats made her out to be, peasants dancing round her to the sound of tabor and drum, their homespun shirts buttoned up with stars. Shaw's was rather grimy, almost naked, save for the green flag draped round her middle. She was grey with the dustiness of flour mixed with the dung of pigs, and her fair hands were horny with the hard work of turning stony ground into a state of fertility. The look on her fine face was one of unholy resignation, like one once in agony, now at ease in the thick topor of morphia. Inconsequence stared from her eyes, and leaving her at ease at home telling her beads, or telling small coins till they mingled and became one, throwing some of both to jingle on a street in Heaven in the way of a priesthood for one of her boys so as to endorse a claim to a rookery nook in a respectable part of Paradise. No fool, she was sure of her place in this world and surer of one in the next. [3]

O'Casey rooted the martial world in the absurdity of daily life, from which revolution blossomed and into which it must finally and inevitably wither. Heroism and absurdity, in the words of Robert O'Driscoll, are "implicit in all... nationalism. A spiritual image may be created, but the image, like man, is as vulnerable as visionary." [4] O'Driscoll further notes that in all heroic action resides an implicit absurdity since "the things that men adore and loathe are ... perhaps the same." [5] Thus a nation must learn to laugh at itself as well as to esteem its edified national qualities. O'Casey challenged the seeming inviolability of Irish idealism by juxtaposing it to the realities so that tradition, myth,

religion, patriotism, and all other illusions

> ... came all asunder, and fell into the dust and rain and cold appraisal of a waxing world, their colours dimmed, the glittering figures forced into fading, the gold between them losing its reverence, and turning an ashen grey in the red glow of all life's problems. [6]

One way in which O'Casey mocked the sanctity of social ideals was with his sympathetic and ironic depiction of anti-heroic characters, among them cowards, drunkards, parasites, prostitutes, and consumptive children, whose tragi-comic aspirations and desires were personal not national, earthly not ideal. In the nightmare world of early twentieth-century Ireland, their only means for survival, for sanity and life were the utilization of their imaginative resilience and comically pretentious rhetoric. As David Krause writes, "It was only natural ... that they could turn a deaf ear on pious principles with the same instinct for self-preservation that inspired Falstaff to cock an irreverent finger at an honourable corpse on the battlefield." [7]

This is what Krause refers to as the principle of knockabout comedy and of farce — the liberation of the individual from the confining and rigid strictures of society. Uninhibited characters like Captain Boyle, Joxer Daly, and Fluther Good transform ritual into farce and reduce "the tyranny of the sublime to the anarchy of

the ridiculous." [8] Freud recognized that order was the antithesis of low comedy. Krause quotes a passage from Civilization and Its Discontents that demonstrates that the freedom of the individual to express his desires, instincts, and his natural exuberance is restricted by society because uninhibited behavior, by its very nature, destroys all semblance of structure. Therefore, society conditions its individuals to become masses of predictable order.

> Order is a kind of repetition-compulsion by which it is ordained once and for all when, where and how a thing shall be done so that on every similar occasion doubt and hesitation shall be avoided.... One would be justified in expecting that it would have ingrained itself from the start and without opposition into all human activities; and one may well wonder that this has not happened, and that, on the contrary, human beings manifest an inborn tendency to negligence, irregularity and untrustworthiness in their work, and have to be laboriously trained to imitate the example of their celestial models. [9]

The spirit of freedom stirs when men reject the "repetition-compulsion" system of order and revert to the anarchy of knockabout comedy, "negligence, irregularity, and untrustworthiness". Sean O'Casey's concentration of the disorderly, rowdy, and exuberant lower classes was to make evident that

> ... perhaps a nation needs the comic wisdom of its irreverent fools as well as the martyred blood of its patriots; perhaps Ireland was not ready for her freedom until her conception of herself was broad enough for the national character to encompass a Fluther Good as well as a Patrick Pearse. [10]

It is perhaps difficult to realize, distanced as we are both in time and location from the Ireland of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, just how radical a departure from conventional modes of thought O'Casey presented in his dramatic role as maintainer of national integrity. In times of military struggle, the tendency is towards a glorification of national life. The popular conception is that all men display courage, all women exhibit the greatest virtue, all citizens place love of country above all other considerations. Inevitably, such idealizations of the national character results in hypocrisy, leading to such protests as those at the first production of The Plough and the Stars that there were no prostitutes in Ireland and that the Irish flag was never seen inside a public-house. O'Casey was an uncompromising artist who depicted Ireland, not in her idealized image of herself but as he found her. Presenting war from the viewpoint of the downtrodden tenement victims, O'Casey dramatized the ignobility of death and poverty despite the seeming nobility of the cause.

O'Casey's vision of his chaotic world is tragi-comic and ironic; his anti-heroes display a carefree impiety which victimizes them, yet paradoxically, enables them to survive. Fluther Good, Peter Flynn, the

Covey, Seumas Shields, Captain Boyle, and Joxer Daly, braggarts and cowards, are trapped by the circumstances of their lives, their poverty, their lack of opportunity for advancement, their insufficient education, and finally by war. Yet, having no goals, they do not attempt to strive to overcome their obstacles. Being directionless is, however, an insulation against failure, upheaval, and disintegration. Their freedom and survival are won by their innate cunning, brilliant rhetoric, lyrical dreams, imaginative bravado, and witty selfishness -- qualities that are at once reprovable and alluring. Throughout the three Abbey plays, O'Casey maintains his dual perspective, mocking his anti-heroes' illusory, drunken bravado and their relinquishment of duty while praising their resilient laughter in a shattered world.

O'Casey's irreverent anti-heroes are viewed by the dramatist as an integral part of Ireland. Seumas Shields, for example, in The Shadow of a Gunman, reveals himself in his condemnation of Ireland. Rising at noon when he should have been up at nine in the morning, praising the braces that he is selling as strong enough for Cuchullian only to have them break as he is stooping to pick up a spoon he has dropped, he can yet say, with a serious face, "They made Balor of the Evil Eye King of Ireland, an' so

signs on it there's neither conscience nor honesty from one end of the country to the other" (The Shadow, I, p. 84), and at the same time fail to perceive the statement's applicability to himself. A ceremonious Catholic in a Catholic land, he forgets all Christian principles in his "snarling laugh of pleasure" that "Shelley is doing a jazz dance down below" (The Shadow, I, p. 82). Davoren recoils from this sentiment and charges that the Irishman's faith is based on fear, not on love.

> Davoren (shocked). And you actually rejoice and are exceedingly glad that, as you believe, Shelley, the sensitive, high-minded, noble-hearted Shelley, is suffering the tortures of the damned.
>
> Seumas. I rejoice in the vindication of the Church and Truth.
>
> Davoren. Bah! You know as little about truth as anybody else, and you care as little about the Church as the least of those that profess her faith; your religion is simply the state of being afraid that God will torture your soul in the next world as you are afraid the Black and Tans will torture your body in this.
>
> (The Shadow, I, p. 82)

As well as portraying cowardice and self-interest, O'Casey also spotlights heroism and unselfish dedication. In The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, and The Plough and the Stars, the women of the tenements, who do not participate in the fighting, are the truly courageous, acting spontaneously out of feelings of devotion or natural instinct rather than out of momentary enthusiasm stirred

up by rhetorical addresses, slogans, or patriotic dogma. The men are obsessed with abstractions, with mass emotion, and are not concerned with individuals and their needs. The fight against poverty, hunger, squalor, and lack of privacy is waged by the women while the men take refuge in philosophy, art, drink, war, and bravado. These latter are cowards for, O'Casey suggests, true bravery is measured by one's readiness for self-sacrifice. The women, generally, although not consistently, maintain a steady eye on the realities and necessities of life, abandoning self-gratification in order to act positively so that the burdens of poverty, anxiety, and war may be lessened. In this way, the main victims of war become heroic. Minnie Powell dies to protect Donal Davoren; Bessie Burgess dies in her attempt to shield Nora from the soldiers' bullets. Juno Boyle and Mrs. Gogan survive to rebuild life from the rubble.

Although the plays depict the individual tragedies of Minnie Powell, Donal Davoren, Juno Boyle, Johnny Boyle, Nora Clitheroe, and Bessie Burgess, they are also, in a wider sense, social tragedies. O'Casey's basic intention was to dramatize the encompassing anarchy that engulfs both individual and group. His depiction of social life, filled with social confusion and political strife, was as

a terrible mass drama of moral and physical disintegration that is the result of human insensitivity. In The Shadow of a Gunman, Seumas Shields' first thought, after Minnie has been led away by the Black and Tans, is not for Minnie's safety but for his own. "Oh, grant she won't say anything!" is his constant prayer. Later, upon learning that Minnie has been fatally shot, his personal sense of shame is not aroused, as is Davoren's; instead, he regards the incident as a verification of the validity of his superstition that a tapping on the wall signifies death: "I knew something ud come of the tappin' on the wall!"

As we have seen, moral and physical disintegration is also vividly apparent in the final scene of Juno and the Paycock, which is at once, as O'Casey wrote in its defence, the comic and tragic highlight of the play.[11] The scene is one of chaos, the bare stage being a physical manifestation of a disintegrating family and country brought on by the drunken irresponsibility and dreaming of Captain Boyle. The Plough and the Stars ends on a similar note, with callousness being displayed in the midst of tragedy. The British soldiers in the tenement house are representations of the British occupation of Ireland. While expressing a momentary regret at the unnecessary death of Bessie Burgess, Sergeant Tinley

dismisses himself from all personal guilt by remarking, "Well, we couldn't afford to toike any chawnces." Irony also abounds in the British singing of "Keep the 'owme fires burning", for the sentiment is at variance with the reality of Dublin ablaze.

The three Abbey plays question contemporary values and re-examine social responsibility. O'Casey used the metaphor of military war to explore the conflict between personal desires and social obligations, to reveal hypocrisy, self-interest or fear among those in the seeming service of Ireland, and to demonstrate the inherent nobility of the common man. Ronald Rollins writes:

> Man had succeeded in erecting a social mechanism that had recoiled upon him, threatening his individuality and personal dignity. The struggle of man to preserve his identity and integrity in the midst of various social pressures, especially those of war ... became... the Dublin dramatist's original theme. All three [Abbey plays] ... rest upon the tragedy of attrition that ensues from the inexorable disruption of a social group by the progression of a society towards a more complex, impersonal condition. [12]

Society as a social mechanism has indeed recoiled upon the individual; in the Dublin trilogy, O'Casey's characters are embroiled in, as B.L. Smith writes, "desperate, sometimes fatalistic struggles against tradition, materialism, religion, nationalism: against forces which, in their uses of human beings, would lessen or

obliterate the joys of life."[13] These forces prolificate because of the passivity of the individual who must, in the final analysis, assume all responsibility for social chaos. Juno Boyle expresses her realization of man's perpetuation of struggle when she sighs, "Ah, what can men do agen the stupidity o' men!" as does Harry Heegan in a later play, The Silver Tassie, when he intones, "The Lord hath given and man hath taken away." Thus O'Casey's answer to Yeats' question: "What stood in the Post Office / With Pearse and Connolly?" would be, as is Robert O'Driscoll's, "The heroic and the absurd," for both elements of human conduct are inseparable in times of military struggle. This is the world of Sean O'Casey's Dublin trilogy, one which the Swiss philosopher H.F. Amiel anticipated in his 1883 Journal Intime:

> Absurdity is interwoven with life: real beings are animated contradictions, absurdities brought into action. Harmony with the self would mean peace, repose, and perhaps immobility. By far the greater number of human beings can only conceive action, or practice it, under the form of war -- a war of competition at home, a bloody war of nations abroad, and finally war with self. So that life is a perpetual conflict; it wills that which it wills not, and wills not that it wills. Hence what I call the law of irony — that is to say the refutation of the self by itself, the concrete realization of the absurd.[14]

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. O'Casey, Sean. Feathers From the Green Crow: Sean O'Casey 1905 - 1925, ed. Robert Hogan, London, Macmillan, 1963, "The Story of the Irish Citizen Army", p. 236. The history was first published in 1919 under the pseudonym of P. O'Cathasaigh. Hereafter Robert Hogan's collection of articles shall be referred to as Feathers From the Green Crow.

2. O'Casey, Sean. Within the Gates, Scene IV, p. 228. All quotations from this play are derived from O'Casey, Sean. Collected Plays, Vol. 2, London, Macmillan, 1964

3. The article "I Predict" is printed in Look Magazine, XXVI, January 16, 1962, p. 16

4. O'Casey, Sean. Under a Colored Cap: Articles Merry and Mournful with Comments and a Song. London, Macmillan, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963, "Immanuel", p. 186. Hereafter, this collection of articles shall be referred to as Under a Colored Cap.

5. O'Casey, Sean. The Green Crow. New York: George Braziller, 1956, "A Whisper About Bernard Shaw", p. 198

6. Ibid., "Bernard Shaw: An Appreciation of a Fighting Idealist", p. 206

7. Shaw, George Bernard. Major Barbara. Penguin, 1971, "Preface", p. 15

8. Ibid., p. 17

9. O'Casey, Sean. The Plough and the Stars, Act IV, p. 201. All quotations from this play are derived from O'Casey, Sean. Three Plays. London, Macmillan, 1969

10. O'Casey, Sean. The Shadow of a Gunman, Act II, p. 105. All quotations from this play are derived from O'Casey, Sean. Three Plays. London, Macmillan, 1969

leaf 151 omitted in page numbering

11. O'Casey, Sean. Pictures in the Hallway. London, Pan Books Ltd., 1971, "All Heaven and Harmsworth Too", p. 215

12. See O'Casey, Sean. Drums under the Windows. London, Pan Books Ltd., 1972, "At the Sign of the Pick and Shovel", p. 24

13. The sincerity and power of this statement increases when one realizes that it was published in 1923 when Sean O'Casey was existing in a state of great poverty and deprivation.

14. O'Casey, Sean. Feathers From the Green Crow, ed. Robert Hogan, London, Macmillan, 1963, "Life and Literature", p. 12. "Life and Literature" first appeared in The Irish Statesman, December 22, 1923.

15. Ibid., p. 12. O'Casey is here utilizing the symbolic nature of the flag's design, the plough representing reality, the stars the ideal.

16. Ibid., p. 13

17. Ibid., p. 17

18. O'Casey, Sean. Drums under the Windows. London, Pan Books Ltd., 1972, "Hora Nivissima", p. 168

19. Ibid., p. 162

20. Ibid., "House of the Dead", p. 55

21. Ibid., "Hora Novissima", p. 169

22. O'Casey, Sean. Pictures in the Hallway. London, Pan Books Ltd., 1971, "The Cap in the Counting House", pp. 174 - 175

23. O'Casey, Sean. Under a Colored Cap. London, Macmillan, 1963, "Immanuel", p. 151

24. Letter in The New Statesman and Nation, August 2, 1941. Quoted by R. Ayling (ed.) in his introduction to O'Casey, Sean. Blasts and Benedictions. London, Macmillan, 1967, p. xiv

25. O'Casey, Sean. Feathers From the Green Crow, ed. Robert Hogan, London, Macmillan, 1963, "Life and Literature", pp. 13-14

26. O'Casey, Sean. Drums under the Windows, London, Pan Books Ltd., 1972, "Hora Nivissima", p. 170

27. Ibid., p. 165

28. O'Casey, Sean. Under a Colored Cap. London, Macmillan, 1963, "Immanuel", pp. 149-150

29. Ibid., "A Merrical of Miracles", p. 207

30. Ibid., "Under a Colored Cap, Part Two", p. 35

31. Ibid., "Immanuel", p. 193

32. Ibid., pp. 155-156

33. Ibid., "The Green Crow Caws", p. 75

34. Ibid., "Culture, Inc.", p. 252

35. Ibid., "Out, Damned Spot", p. 258

36. Ibid., "The Green Crow Caws", p. 73

37. Ibid., "Immanuel", p. 196

38. O'Casey, Sean. Drums under the Windows, London, Pan Books Ltd., 1972, "St. Vincent Provides a Bed", p. 251

39. O'Casey, Sean. Blasts and Benedictions, ed. Ronald Ayling, London, Macmillan, 1967, "Behind the Curtained World", p. 11

40. Ibid., p. 18

41. O'Casey, Sean. Under a Colored Cap. London, Macmillan, 1963, "Immanuel", p. 154

42. O'Casey, Sean. Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well. London, Pan Books Ltd., 1972, "High Road and Low Road", p. 19

43. Ayling, Ronald. "Recurrent Patterns in O'Casey's Drama", unpublished typescript, p. 10

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Part of a letter to R. Rollins from O'Casey, dated July 19, 1963. Quoted in Rollins, Ronald. "Form and Content in Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy", Modern Drama, VIII 4(February 1966), p. 419

2. All further references within the text to The Shadow of a Gurman will be in the abbreviated form The Shadow.

3. O'Casey, Sean. Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, London, Pan Books Ltd., 1972, "The Raid", p. 48

4. Ibid., pp. 49-50

5. Ibid., pp. 51-52

6. This theme is elaborated further through the figure of Clitheroe in The Plough and the Stars.

7. Any possible credibility of Grigson's version is sharply diminished by his ascribing two of his most common phrases — "have you me?" and "there's no blotting it out" — to the Auxiliary.

8. The idea of contrasting Acts I and II of The Shadow of a Gurman was suggested to me by R.F. Ayling's unpublished article on the play. Dr. Ayling also analyzes the elements of contrast between the acts -- for example, displays of rhetoric, poetic skills, and bombast -- in far greater detail and profusion than I have done here.

9. This fact ironically supports Seumas Shields' contention (which was directed against Minnie and other women like her): "An' as for bein' brave, it's easy to be that when you've no cause for cowardice" (The Shadow, II, p. 109).

10. Ayling, R. "The Shadow of a Gurman", unpublished typescript, p. 21. The excellent discussion of Davoren's poetry extends to p. 24.

11. Part of a letter from O'Casey to Rollins dated July 14, 1963 and quoted by Ronald Rollins in

"Form and Content in Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy", Modern Drama, VIII 4(February 1966), p. 423

12. Ibid., pp. 423-424. This is an excerpt from another letter from O'Casey to Rollins dated March 29, 1959.

13. Synge, John M. The Playboy of the Western World, Act III. Masterpieces of the Modern Irish Theatre, ed. Robert W. Corrigan, Collier Books, Macmillan, 1969, p. 132

14. Ussher, Arland. The Mind and Face of Ireland, Gollancz, New York, 1950, pp. 65-66

15. There is a similarity between this parody of the credo of the Mass and another, that in Act II of The Silver Tassie in which the soldiers chant their faith in the gun.

16. O'Casey, Sean. Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, London, Pan Books Ltd., "Hail and Farewell", pp. 43-44

17. Ayling, R. "History and Artistry in Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy", Theoria, October 1971, p. 7

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Part of a letter from O'Casey to Rollins dated July 19, 1963. Quoted in Rollins, Ronald, "Form and Content in Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy", Modern Drama, VIII 4(February 1966), p. 424

2. All further references within the text to Juno and the Paycock will be in the abbreviated form Juno.

   The use of the coal vendor's chant periodically rising above the "reminiscence" is expressionistic and similar to the Act IV cry of "Red Cr...oss, Red Cr...oss! ... Ambu...lance, Ambu...lance!" in The Plough and the Stars. It brings to mind Juno's earlier remark, "Everybody callin' you 'Captain', an' you only wanst on the wather, in an oul' collier from here to Liverpool, when anybody, to listen or look at you, ud take you for a second Christo For Columbus!" (I, p. 14)

3. Fraser, G.S. The Modern Writer and His World (London, 1953), p. 44. Quoted by Ronald Ayling in "History and Artistry in Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy", Theoria, January 1971, p. 4

4. Ibid., p. 3

5. Ibid., pp. 3-4. A quotation by Ronald Ayling of William D'Arcy's The Fenian Movement in the United States, 1858 - 1866 (Washington, 1947), p. 235.

6. O'Casey, Sean. "O'Casey in Hungarian Costume", Blasts and Benedictions, ed. Ronald Ayling, Macmillan, 1967, p. 135

7. Clitheroe in The Plough and the Stars and Mick Clonervy in "Comrades" in Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well also exhibit this same jealousy for men in command and the desire for promotion.

8. This abverb takes on added significance in reference to the Croucher, symbol of the war victim, in The Silver Tassie.

9. O'Casey, Sean. The Silver Tassie, III, p. 86. Contained in O'Casey, Sean. Three More Plays, Macmillan, 1969

10. O'Casey, Sean. "O'Casey in Hungarian Costume", Blasts and Benedictions, ed. Ronald Ayling, Macmillan, 1967, p. 136

11. Part of a letter from Sean O'Casey to Rollins, dated March 31, 1959. Quoted in Rollins, Ronald, Sean O'Casey: The Man with Two Faces, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1960, p. 59

12. Saros Cowasjee, in his article "The Juxtaposition of Tragedy and Comedy in the Plays of Sean O'Casey", Wascana Review, II 1(1966), p. 84, quotes O'Casey as writing to him that the epilogue of Juno and the Paycock "is in my opinion the comic highlight (and the tragic highlight too) of the play".

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. All further references within the text to The Plough and the Stars will be in the abbreviated form The Plough.

2. Fluther's remark bears a striking similarity to Sylvester and Simon's commentary on Susie's "persecutin'" tambourine theology in The Silver Tassie. Although Simon and Sylvester celebrate the natural joy and exuberance that Harry represents, their direct statements on religion reveal their attitudes as being complacent and a brand of good-humored hypocrisy.

   Simon. In a church, somehow or other, it [evangelist preaching] seems natural enough, and even in the street it's all right, for one thing is as good as another in the wide-open ear of the air, but in the delicate quietness of your own home it, it --
   Sylvester. Jars on you!
   Simon. Exactly!
   Sylvester. If she'd only confine her glory-to-God business to the festivals, Christmas, now, or even Easter, Simon, it would be recommendable; for a few days before Christmas, like the quiet raisin' of a curtain, an' a few days after, like the gentle lowerin' of one, there's nothing more ... more --
   Simon. Appropriate....
   Sylvester. Exhilaratin' than the singin' of the Adestay Fidellis.

   (The Silver Tassie, I, p. 30)

3. O'Casey, Sean. Drums under the Windows, London, Pan Books Ltd., 1972, "Under the Plough and the Stars", pp. 226 - 227

4. Ibid., p. 228

5. Ibid., pp. 227-228

6. Mrs. Gogan's lack of awareness that her actions are both improper and irritating is apparent both by the frequency of the reprimands she receives and the mock

tone with which she delivers her standard and well-worn apology, "O excuse me!" An example of this occurs during her examination of Peter's regalia. The first article that attracts her attention is the ceremonial sword. Peter, upon entering the room, sees her with the sword, "goes over to her, pulls it resentfully out of her hands, and marches into the room, Back without speaking." Mrs. Gogan's comments as he does this are, "Oh, excuse me! ... (To Fluther) Isn't he th' surly oul' rascal!" A few minutes later, she is examining and making satiric comments about Peter's shirt:

Mrs. Gogan (holding out the shirt towards Fluther). How would you like to be wearin' this Lord Mayor's nightdhress, Fluther?.... Oh, excuse me!

(Peter has again entered, and he pulls the shirt from the hands of Mrs. Gogan, replacing it on the chair. He returns to the room.

Peter (as he goes out). Well, God Almighty, give me patience!

Mrs. Gogan (to Peter). Oh, excuse me!

7. Ayling, Ronald. "Recurrent Patterns in O'Casey's Drama", unpublished typescript, p. 41

8. O'Casey, Sean. Drums under the Windows, London, Pan Books Ltd., 1972, "Hora Novissima", p. 160

9. Part of a letter from O'Casey to Rollins dated March 31, 1959. Quoted in Rollins, Ronald. "Form and Content in Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy", Modern Drama, VIII 4(February 1966), p. 424

10. For an absorbing and detailed account of O'Casey's borrowings and omissions from Pearse, see Armstrong, W.A. "The Sources and Themes of The Plough and the Stars", Modern Drama, IV 3(Dec 1961), pp.234-242

11. O'Casey, Sean. The Plough and the Stars, Act II, p. 164. Ironically, in the stress of battle, Peter the warrior proves to be the least courageous. In Act III, he suppresses his urge to join in the looting for fear of being shot and in Act IV, while hiding in Bessie's flat, also displays great apprehension during the situation.

12. Armstrong, W.A. "Sources and Themes of The Plough and the Stars", Modern Drama, IV 3(Dec 1961), p. 236

13. This statement embraces a pagan concept or sentiment in a passage of overtly Christian associations. As such, it illustrates the mixture of paganism and Christianity common to the Irish people.

14. O'Casey, Sean. The Plough and the Stars, II, p. 168 Fluther's jibe is very similar to O'Casey's observation on Mick Clonervy, a rancher's son whom he first met when the former came to Dublin with cattle for the English market:

> But Mick was Michael now. A colonel in a fine new Army, one of Ireland's Own. The superfine green cloth of his uniform, the gay, dignified strip on his shoulder strap, denoting his rank, the highly polished brown leggings guarding his sturdy limbs, or the splendid, saucily peaked cap took away no sign of the man's clumsily patterned nature. No matter how smartly he might be saluted, or how often, Colonel Michael Clonervy was Mick Clonervy still. His wide, fleshy face now beamed with joyous embarrassment as he noticed Sean scanning the prim richness of his uniform. There wasn't a button astray on it. Even the ugly-looking holster, where a gun was nesting, was neatly latched by a tongue of leather linked to a button of gleaming brass. But the wearer of this glory was ill at ease. The smart, elegant uniform fitted the body, but it failed to fit the spirit of the man. He would have felt himself happier in the old clothes spattered with cow-dung to give them taste and character .... No garment, however rich, no dignity or brightness of uniform, could make this fellow be other than Mick Clonervy who so efficiently manoeuvred his father's cattle on to the boats, heedless of... the slippery patches of their dung through which his hobnailed boots had one time so safely and so merrily splashed.

O'Casey, Sean. Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, London, Pan Books Ltd., 1972, "Comrades", pp. 102-103. The italics are mine.

15. Ritchie, Harry M. "The Influence of Melodrama on the Early Plays of Sean O'Casey", Modern Drama, V 2(Sept 1962), p. 170

16. O'Casey, Sean. Drums under the Windows, London, Pan Books Ltd., 1972, "Hora Novissima", p. 163

17. Ibid., p. 165

18. Conrad, Joseph. "Heart of Darkness", p. 297 Contained in Conrad, Joseph. Three Great Tales, New York, Vintage Books

19. It is interesting to note that in times of relative political peace, the characters in the tenement house are at war with one another but when political upheaval enters directly into their lives, their petty disagreements are submerged by their awareness of their common fate.

20. The Covey comments, "Sure she never got any care. How could she get it, an' th' mother out day an' night lookin' for work, an' her consumptive husband leavin' her with a baby to be born before he died!" (IV, p. 201) Later he rebukes Corporal Stoddart for his callousness:

Corporal Stoddart. Was she plugged?
The Covey. Ah, no; died of consumption.
Corporal Stoddart. Ow, is that all? Thought she moight 'ave been plugged.
The Covey. Is that all? Isn't it enough? D'ye know, comrade, that more die o' consumption than are killed in th' wars? An' it's all because of th' system we're livin' undher?
(The Plough, IV, p. 208)

21. Armstrong, W.A. "Sources and Themes in The Plough and the Stars", Modern Drama, IV 3(Dec 1961). p. 242

22. There is also another aspect to Bessie's altruism — she has given a son to fight for England. She speaks of herself:

> Bessie Burgess ... always made it her business to harness herself for Church whenever she knew that God Save the King was goin' to be sung at t'end of th' service; whose only son went to th' front in th' first contingent of the Dublin

> Fusiliers, an' that's on his way home carryin' a shatthered arm that he got fightin' for his King an' counthry! (IV, p. 210)

There is tragic irony in this circumstance, for not only does this anti-war play demonstrate the futility of such sacrifices as her son has made, but her son is coming home maimed in his fight for England only to find that his mother has been shot by the English who callously dismiss the incident because they can't afford to "toike any chawnces".

23. Shaw, George Bernard. Heartbreak House, Penguin, 1970, "Heartbreak House and Horseback Hall", p. 7

24. Ibid., p. 21

25. Ibid., p. 45

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. See Ayling, R. "History and Artistry in Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy", Theoria, January 1971, particularly pages 1 - 6, where he writes of the cyclical unity of the Dublin trilogy and of the forces which create this unity. Dr. Ayling notes that the "individual plays, though self-contained and complete within themselves, are more meaningful in conjunction with the other plays relating to their particular cycle, and together with them, add up to a panoramic view of a country in a state of chaos" (p. 1).

2. O'Casey, Sean. Drums under the Windows, London, Pan Books Ltd., 1972, "Green Fire on the Hearth", p. 173

3. Ibid., p. 173

4. O'Driscoll, Robert (ed.) Theatre and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland, University of Toronto Press, 1971, p. 14

5. Ibid., p. 17

6. O'Casey, Sean. Drums under the Windows, London, Pan Books Ltd., 1972, "Behold, My Family is Poor", p. 66

7. Krause, David. "Sean O'Casey and the Higher Nationalism", Theatre and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland, ed. Robert O'Driscoll, University of Toronto Press, 1971, p. 133

8. Krause, David. "The Principle of Comic Disintegration", James Joyce Quarterly, VIII 1(fall 1970), p. 4

9. Ibid., p. 4

10. Krause, David. "Sean O'Casey and the Higher Nationalism", Theatre and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland, ed. Robert O'Driscoll, University of Toronto Press, 1971, p. 133

11. Cowasjee, Saros. "The Juxtaposition of Tragedy and Comedy in the Plays of Sean O'Casey", Wascana Review, II 1(1966), p. 84

12. Rollins, Ronald. Sean O'Casey: The Man with Two Faces, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1960, p. 38

13. Smith, B.L. "O'Casey's Satiric Vision", James Joyce Quarterly, VIII 1(fall 1970), p. 16

14. Quoted by W.B. Stein in "Conrad's East: Time, History, Action, and Maya" in Texas Studies in Literature and Language, Vol. 7, 1965, p. 277

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